

*Frontispiece Vol. I.*



LAURENCE STERNE, A.M.  
Prebendary of York &c.&c.

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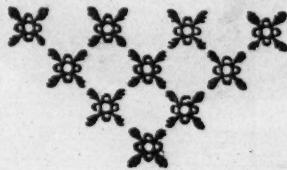
T H E  
S E R M O N S

O F

Mr. Y O R I C K.

V O L. I.

A N E W E D I T I O N.



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## P R E F A C E.

THE sermon which gave  
rise to the publication  
of these, having been offered  
to the world as a sermon of  
*Yorick's*, I hope the most se-  
rious reader will find nothing  
to offend him, in my con-  
tinuing these two volumes  
under the same title: lest it  
should be otherwise, I have  
added a second title-page

vi    P R E F A C E.

with the real name of the author—the first will serve the bookfeller's purpose, as *Yarick*'s name is possibly of the two the more known ;— and the second will ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jest was meant.

I suppose it is needless to inform the public, that the reason

## P R E F A C E. vii

reason of printing these sermons, arises altogether from the favourable reception, which the sermon given as a sample of them in TRISTRAM SHANDY met with from the world ; — That sermon was printed by itself some years ago, but could find neither purchasers nor readers ; so that I apprehended little hazard from a promise I made upon its republica-

A 4 tition,

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tion, “ That if the sermon  
“ was liked, these should be  
“ also at the world’s ser-  
“ vice;” which, to be as good  
as my word, they here are,  
and I pray to GOD, they may  
do it the service I wish. I  
have little to say in their be-  
half, except this, that not  
one of them was composed  
with any thoughts of being  
printed ;—they have been  
hastily written, and carry the  
marks

## P R E F A C E.      ix

marks of it along with them.

—This may be no recommendation;—I mean it however as such ; for as the sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, I trust they will be no less felt, or worse received, for the evidence they bear, of proceeding more from the heart than the head. I have nothing

## X PREFACE.

nothing to add, but that the reader, upon old and beaten subjects, must not look for many new thoughts — 'tis well if he has new language ; in three or four passages, where he has neither the one nor the other, I have quoted the author I made free with — there are some other passages, where I suspect I may have taken the same liberty, — but 'tis only suspi-

P R E F A C E .      xi

cion, for I do not remember  
it is so, otherwise I should  
have restored them to their  
proper owners, so that I put  
it in here more as a general  
saving, than from a consci-  
ousness of having much to  
answer for upon that score: in  
this however, and every thing  
else, which I offer, or shall  
offer to the world, I rest,  
with a heart much at ease,  
upon the protection of the  
humane

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humane and candid, from whom I have received many favours, for which I beg leave to return them thanks.—thanks.



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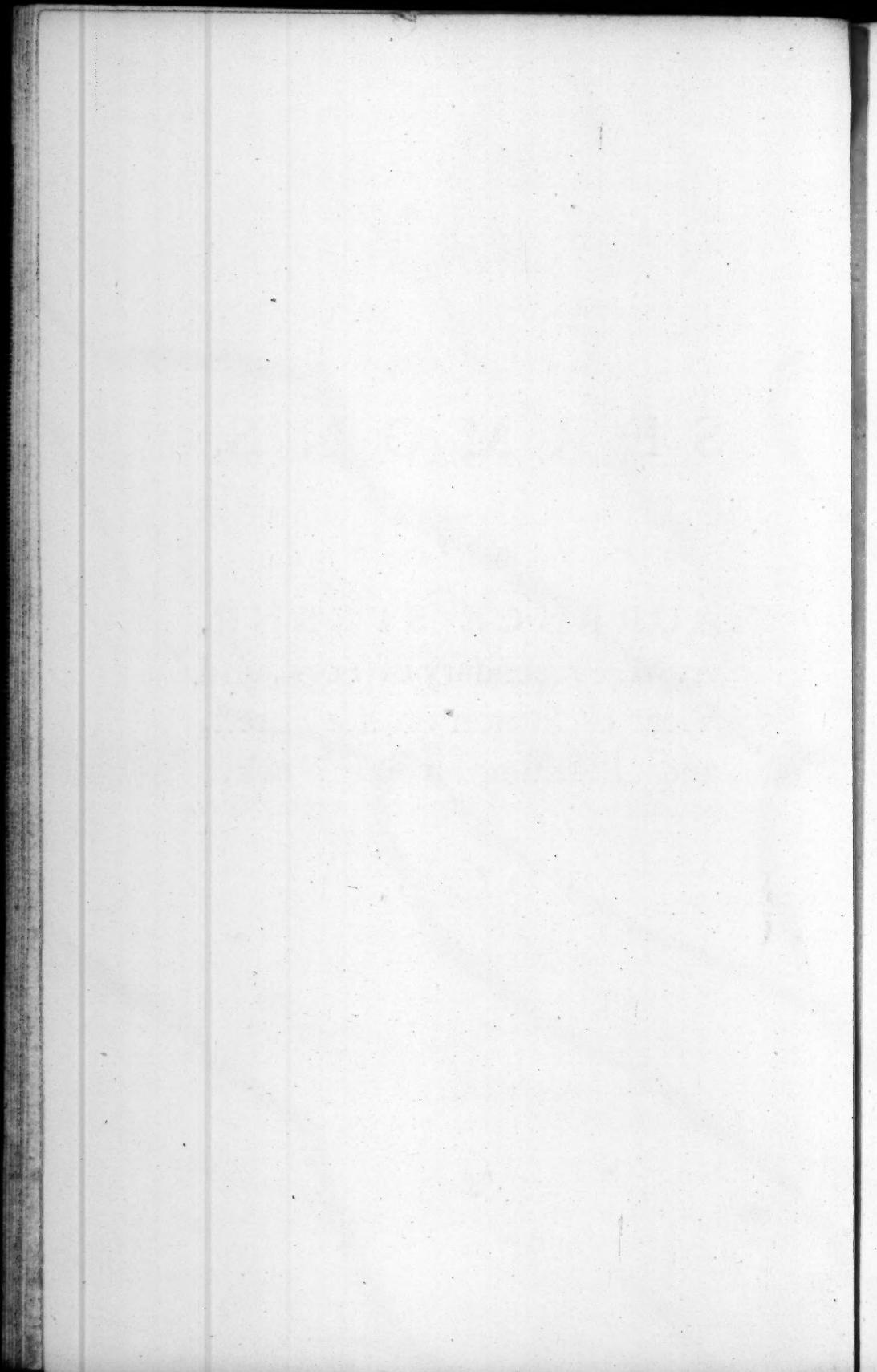
# S E R M O N S

B Y

LAURENCE STERNE,  
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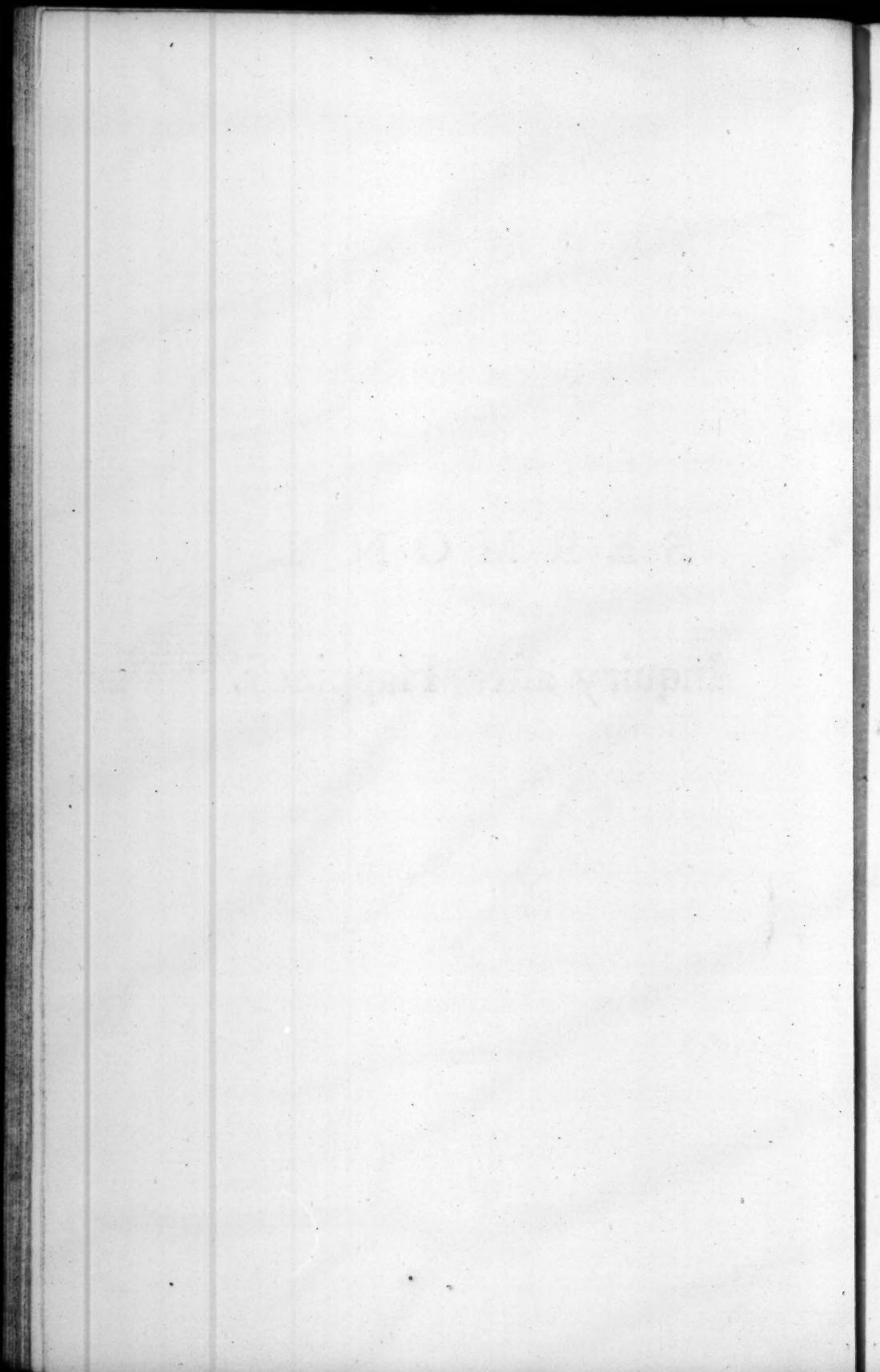
V O L. I.

E



S E R M O N I.

Inquiry after Happiness.



## S E R M O N I.

### PSALM IV. 6.

*There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?—Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

THE great pursuit of man is after happiness: it is the first and strongest desire of his nature;—in every stage of his life, he searches for it as for hid treasure;—courts it under a thousand different shapes,—and though perpetually disappointed,—still persists—runs after and enquires for it afresh—asks every passenger who comes in his way, *Who will shew him any good?*—who will assist him in the attainment of it, or direct him to the

6        S E R M O N I.

discovery of this great end of all his wishes.

He is told by one, to search for it among the more gay and youthful pleasures of life, in scenes of mirth and sprightliness where happiness ever presides, and is ever to be known by the joy and laughter which he will see at once painted in her looks.

A second, with a graver aspect, points out to the costly dwellings which pride and extravagance have erected:--tells the enquirer that the object he is in search of inhabits there—that happiness lives only in company with the great, in the midst of much pomp and outward state. That he will easily find her out by the coat of many colours she has on, and the great luxury and expence of equipage  
and

## SERMON I.

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and furniture with which she always sits surrounded.

The miser blesses God!—wonders how any one would mislead, and wilfully put him upon so wrong a scent—convinces him that happiness and extravagance never inhabited under the same roof;—that if he would not be disappointed in his search, he must look into the plain and thrifty dwelling of the prudent man, who knows and understands the worth of money, and cautiously lays it up against an evil hour: that it is not the prostitution of wealth upon the passions, or the parting with it at all, that constitutes happiness—but that it is the keeping it together, and the **Having** and **Holding** it fast to him and his heirs for ever, which are the chief attributes that form this great

B 4

idol

idol of human worship, to which so much incense is offered up every day.

The epicure, though he easily rectifies so gross a mistake, yet at the same time he plunges him, if possible, into a greater; for hearing the object of his pursuit to be happiness, and knowing of no other happiness than what is seated immediately in his senses,—he sends the enquirer there;—tells him 'tis in vain to search elsewhere for it, than where nature herself has placed it—in the indulgence and gratification of the appetites, which are given us for that end: and in a word—if he will not take his opinion in the matter—he may trust the word of a much wiser man, who has assured us—that there is nothing better in this world, than that a man should eat and drink and rejoice in his works, and make his soul enjoy

## S E R M O N I. 9

enjoy good in his labour—for that is his portion.

To rescue him from this brutal experiment—ambition takes him by the hand and carries him into the world,—shews him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them,—points out the many ways of advancing his fortune and raising himself to honour,—lays before his eyes all the charms and bewitching temptations of power, and asks if there can be any happiness in this world like that of being caressed, courted, flattered, and followed?

To close all, the philosopher meets him bustling in the full career of this pursuit—stops him—tells him, if he is in search of happiness, he is far gone out of his way.

That

That this deity has long been banished from noise and tumults, where there was no rest found for her, and was fled into solitude far from all commerce of the world ; and in a word, if he would find her, he must leave this busy and intriguing scene, and go back to that peaceful scene of retirement and books, from which he first set out.

In this circle too often does a man run, tries all experiments, and generally sits down wearied and dissatisfied with them all at last—in utter despair of ever accomplishing what he wants—nor knowing what to trust to after so many disappointments ; or where to lay the fault, whether in the incapacity of his own nature, or the insufficiency of the enjoyments themselves.

In

## SERMON I.

II

In this uncertain and perplexed state  
—without knowledge which way to  
turn or where to betake ourselves for  
refuge—so often abused and de-  
ceived by the many who pretend thus  
to shew us any good—LORD ! says  
the psalmist, lift up the light of thy  
countenance upon us. Send us some  
rays of thy grace and heavenly wisdom,  
in this benighted search after happiness,  
to direct us safely to it. O GOD ! let  
us not wander for ever without a guide,  
in this dark region in endless pursuit  
of our mistaken good, but enlighten  
our eyes that we sleep not in death—  
open to them the comforts of thy  
holy word and religion—lift up the  
light of thy countenance upon us,—  
and make us know the joy and satis-  
faction

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faction of living in the true faith and fear of Thee, which only can carry us to this haven of rest where we would be—that sure haven, where true joys are to be found, which will at length not only answer all our expectations—but satisfy the most unbounded of our wishes for ever and ever.

The words thus opened, naturally reduce the remaining part of the discourse under two heads.—The first part of the verse—“there be many “that say, Who will shew us any “good?”—to make some reflections upon the insufficiency of most of our enjoyments towards the attainment of happiness, upon some of the most received plans on which ’tis generally sought.

The

## S E R M O N I.

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The examination of which will lead us up to the source and true secret of all happiness, suggested to us in the latter part of the verse—"Lord! lift thou up "the light of thy countenance upon us"—that there can be no real happiness without religion and virtue, and the assistance of God's Grace and holy Spirit to direct our lives in the true pursuit of it.

Let us enquire into the disappointments of human happiness, on some of the most received plans on which 'tis generally sought for and expected, by the bulk of mankind.

There is hardly any subject more exhausted, or which at one time or other has afforded more matter for argument and declamation, than this one, of the in-

## 14      S E R M O N I.

insufficiency of our enjoyments. Scarce a reformed sensualist from Solomon down to our own days, who has not in some fits of repentance or disappointment uttered some sharp reflection upon the emptiness of human pleasure, and of the vanity of vanities which discovers itself in all the pursuits of mortal man.— But the mischief has been, that though so many good things have been said, they have generally had the fate to be considered either as the overflowings of disgust from fated appetites which could no longer relish the pleasures of life, or as the declamatory opinions of recluse and splenetic men who had never tasted them at all, and consequently were thought no judges of the matter. So that 'tis no great wonder, if the greatest part of such reflections, however just in themselves and

## S E R M O N I.      15

and founded on truth and a knowledge of the world, are found to leave little impression where the imagination was already heated with great expectations of future happiness ; and that the best lectures that have been read upon the vanity of the world, so seldom stop a man in the pursuit of the object of his desire, or give him half the conviction, that the possession of it will, and what the experience of his own life, or a careful observation upon the life of others, do at length generally confirm to us all.

Let us endeavour then to try the cause upon this issue ; and instead of recurring to the common arguments, or taking any one's word in the case, let us trust to matter of fact ; and if, upon enquiry, it appears that the actions of mankind are not to be accounted for upon any other prin-

## 16      S E R M O N   I.

principle, but this of the insufficiency of our enjoyments, 'twill go farther towards the establishment of the truth of this part of the discourse, than a thousand speculative arguments which might be offered upon the occasion.

Now, if we take a survey of the life of man from the time he is come to reason, to the latest decline of it in old age —we shall find him engaged, and generally hurried on in such a succession of different pursuits, and different opinions of things, through the different stages of his life—as will admit of no explication, but this, that he finds no rest for the sole of his foot, on any of the plans where he has been led to expect it.

The moment he has got loose from tutors and governors, and is left to judge for

## S E R M O N I.      17

for himself, and pursue this scheme his own way—his first thoughts are generally full of the mighty happiness which he is going to enter upon, from the free enjoyment of the pleasures in which he sees others of his age and fortune engaged.

In consequence of this—take notice, how his imagination is caught by every glittering appearance that flatters this expectation.—Observe what impressions are made upon his senses, by diversions, music, dress, and beauty—and how his spirits are upon the wing, flying in pursuit of them ; that you would think he could never have enough.

Leave him to himself a few years, till the edge of appetite is worn down—and you will scarce know him again. You

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will

## 18 SERMON. I.

will find him entered into engagements, and setting up for a man of business and conduct, talking of no other happiness but what centers in projects of making the most of this world, and providing for his children and children's children after them. Examine his notions, he will tell you, that the gayer pleasures of youth, are only fit for those who know not how to dispose of themselves and time to better advantage. That however fair and promising they might appear to a man unpractised in them— they were no better than a life of folly and impertinence, and so far from answering your expectations of happiness, 'twas well if you escaped without pain.— That in every experiment he had tried, he had found more bitter than sweet, and for the little pleasure one could snatch— it too often left a terrible sting behind it:

Besides,

## S E R M O N I.      19

Besides, did the balance lie on the other side, he would tell you there could be no true satisfaction where a life runs on in so giddy a circle, out of which a wise man should extricate himself as soon as he can, that he may begin to look forwards.

—That it becomes a man of character and consequence to lay aside childish things, to take care of his interests, to establish the fortune of his family, and place it out of want and dependence : and in a word, if there is such a thing as happiness upon earth, it must consist in the accomplishment of this ;—and for his own part, if God should prosper his endeavours so as to be worth such a sum, or to be able to bring such a point to bear—he shall be one of the happiest of the sons of men.—In full assurance of this, on he drudges—plots—contrives—rises early—late takes rest,

and eats the bread of carefulness, till at length by hard labour and perseverance, he has reached if not outgone the object he had first in view.—When he has got thus far—if he is a plain and sincere man, he will make no scruple to acknowledge truly what alteration he has found in himself.—If you ask him—he will tell you that his imagination painted something before his eyes, the reality of which he has not yet attained to: that with all the accumulations of his wealth, he neither lives the merrier, sleeps the sounder, or has less care and anxiety upon his spirits than at his first setting out.

Perhaps, you'll say, some dignity, honour, or title only is wanting—Oh ! could I accomplish that, as there would be nothing left then for me to wish, good GOD ! how happy should I be !

'Tis

## S E R M O N I.

21

'Tis still the same—the dignity or title—though they crown his head with honour—add not one cubit to his happiness.—Upon summing up the account, all is found to be seated merely in the imagination.—The faster he has pursued, the faster the phantom fled before him, and to use the Satirist's comparison of the chariot wheels,—haste as they will, they must for ever keep the same distance.

But what? though I have been thus far disappointed in my expectations of happiness from the possession of riches—  
“ Let me try whether I shall not meet  
“ with it in the spending and fashion-  
“ able enjoyment of them.”

Behold! I will get me down, and make me great works, and build me

C 3

houses,

## 22      S E R M O N   I.

houses, and plant me vineyards, and make me gardens and pools of water.—And I will get me servants and maidens, and whatsoever my eyes desire, I will not keep from them.

In prosecution of this—he drops all gainful pursuits — withdraws himself from the busy part of the world—realizes—pulls down—builds up again. Buys statues, pictures,—plants, and plucks up by the roots—levels mountains—and fills up valleys—turns rivers into dry ground, and dry ground into rivers.—Says unto this man, go, and he goeth, and unto another, do this; and he doeth it,—and whatsoever his soul lusteth after of this kind, he withholdeth not from it. When every thing is thus planned by himself, and executed according to his wish and direction, surely he is

is arrived to the accomplishment of his wishes, and has got to the summit of all human happiness?—Let the most fortunate adventurers in this way, answer the question for him, and say—how often it arises higher than a bare and simple amusement—and well, if you can compound for that—since 'tis often purchased at so high a price, and so soured by a mixture of other incidental vexations, as to become too often a work of repentance; which in the end will extort the same sorrowful confession from him, which it did from Solomon in the like case,—Lo! I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do—and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit—and there was no profit to me under the sun.

To inflame this account the more—  
'twill be no miracle, if upon casting it  
up he has gone farther lengths than he  
first intended, run into expences which  
have entangled his fortune, and brought  
himself into such difficulties as to make  
way for the last experiment he can try  
—and that is, to turn miser, with no  
happiness in view but what is to rise  
out of the little designs of a sordid  
mind, set upon saving and scraping up  
all he has injudiciously spent.

In this last stage—behold him a poor  
trembling wretch, shut up from all man-  
kind—sinking into utter contempt;  
spending careful days and sleepless nights  
in pursuit of what a narrow and contracted  
heart can never enjoy:—and let us here  
leave him to the conviction he will one  
day find—That there is no end of his la-  
bour

## S E R M O N I. 25

'bour—That his eyes will never be satisfied with riches, or will say—For whom do I labour and bereave myself of rest? —This is also a fore travel.

I believe this is no uncommon picture of the disappointments of human life—and the manner our pleasures and enjoyments slip from under us in every stage of our life. And though I would not be thought by it, as if I was denying the reality of pleasures, or disputing the being of them, any more, than one would the reality of pain—yet I must observe on this head, that there is a plain distinction to be made betwixt pleasure and happiness. For though there can be no happiness without pleasure—yet the reverse of the proposition will not hold true.—We are so made, that from the common gratifications of our appetites, and the impressions of a thousand objects,

we

we snatch the one, like a transient gleam, without being suffered to taste the other, and enjoy the perpetual sun-shine and fair weather which constantly attend it. This, I contend, is only to be found in religion—in the consciousness of virtue—and the sure and certain hopes of a better life, which brightens all our prospects, and leaves no room to dread disappointments—because the expectation of it is built upon a rock whose foundations are as deep as those of heaven and hell.

And though in our pilgrimage through this world—some of us may be so fortunate as to meet with some clear fountains by the way, that may cool, for a few moments, the heat of this great thirst of happiness—yet our Saviour, who knew the world, though he enjoyed but little of it, tells us, that whosoever drinketh of this water will thirst again:

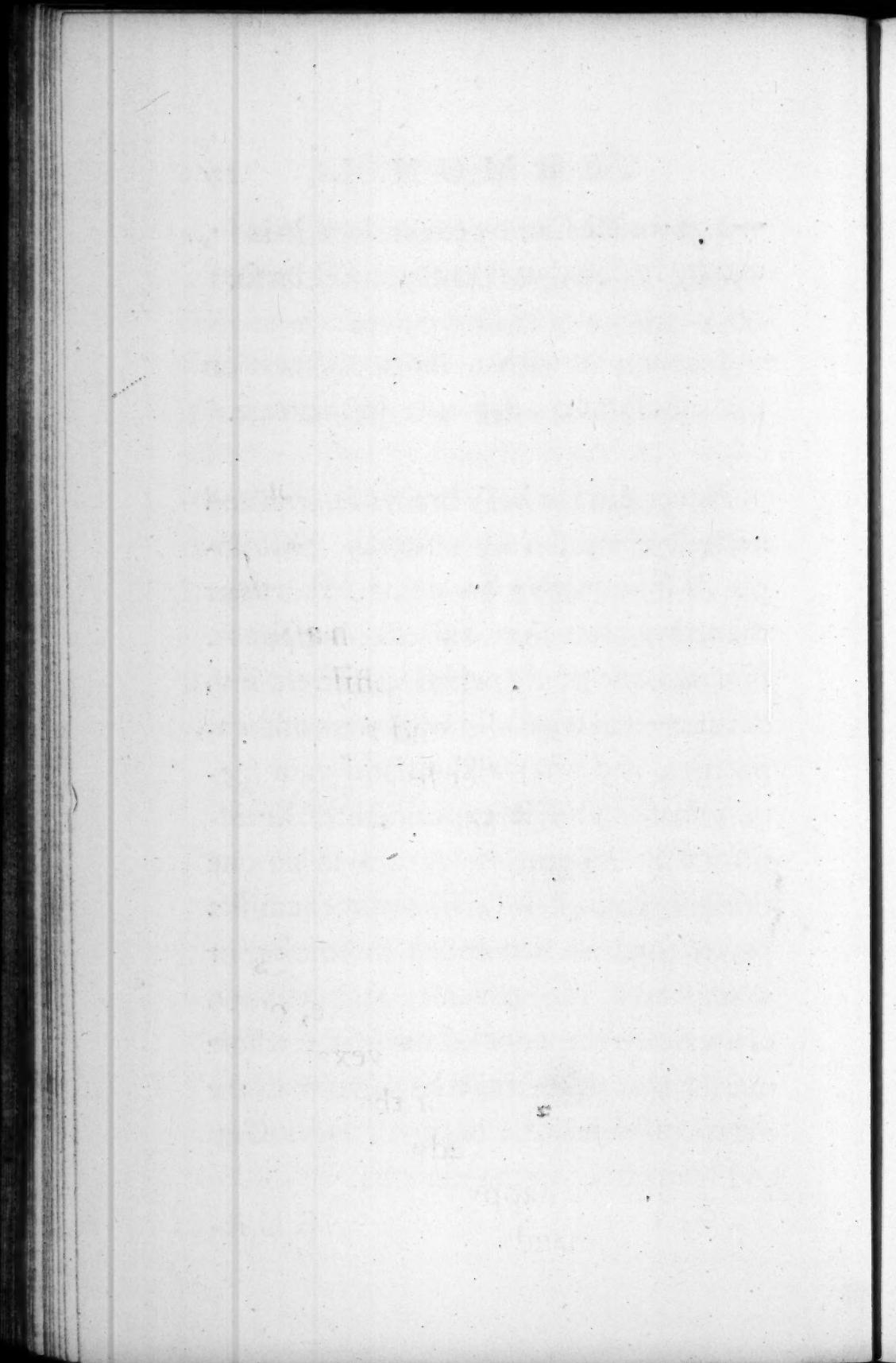
—and

## S E R M O N I. 27

—and we all find by experience it is so,  
and by reason that it always must be so.

I conclude with a short observation  
upon Solomon's evidence in this case.

Never did the busy brain of a lean and  
hectick chemist search for the philo-  
sopher's stone with more pains and ardour  
than this great man did after happiness.  
He was one of the wisest enquirers into  
nature—had tried all her powers and ca-  
pacities, and after a thousand vain spe-  
culations and vile experiments, he af-  
firmed at length, it lay hid in no one  
thing he had tried; like the chemist's  
projections all had ended in smoke, or  
what was worse, in vanity and vexation  
of spirit:—the conclusion of the whole  
matter was this—that he advises every  
man who would be happy, to fear God  
and keep his commandments.



S E R M O N II.

The House of Feasting

A N D

The House of Mourning

DESCRIBED.

• H. M. M. E. S. S.

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36

6

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[ 32 ]

## S E R M O N II.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 2, 3.

*It is better to go to the house of mourning  
than to the house of feasting.—*

**T**HAT I deny—but let us hear the wise man's reasoning upon it—for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart: sorrow is better than laughter—for a crack'd-brain'd order of Carthusian monks, I grant, but not for men of the world: For what purpose, do you imagine, has God made us? for the social sweets of the well-watered valleys, where he has planted us, or for the dry and dismal desert of a *Sierra Morena*? are the sad accidents of life, and the uncheery hours which

## 32      S E R M O N II.

which perpetually overtake us, are they not enough, but we must sally forth in quest of them,—belye our own hearts, and say as your text would have us, that they are better than those of joy? did the Best of Beings send us into the world for this end—to go weeping through it,—to vex and shorten a life short and vexatious enough already? do you think, my good preacher, that he who is infinitely happy, can envy us our enjoyments? or that a Being so infinitely kind would grudge a mournful traveller the short rest and refreshments necessary to support his spirits through the stages of a weary pilgrimage? or that he would call him to a severe reckoning, because in his way he had hastily snatched at some little fugacious pleasures, merely to sweeten this uneasy journey of life, and reconcile him to the ruggedness of

the

## S E R M O N II.      33

the road, and the many hard justlings he is sure to meet with ? Consider, I beseech you, what provision and accommodation, the Author of our being has prepared for us, that we might not go on our way sorrowing—how many caravanseras of rest—what powers and faculties he has given us for taking it—what apt objects he has placed in our way to entertain us ;—some of which he has made so fair, so exquisitely fitted for this end, that they have power over us for a time to charm away the sense of pain, to cheer up the dejected heart under poverty and sickness, and make it go and remember its miseries no more.

I will not contend at present against this rhetoric ; I would choose rather for a moment to go on with the allegory, and say we are travellers, and, in the most

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affecting

34 . S E R M O N II.

affecting sense of that idea, that like travellers, though upon business of the last and nearest concern to us, may surely be allowed to amuse ourselves with the natural or artificial beauties of the country we are passing through, without reproach of forgetting the main errand we are sent upon ; and if we can so order it, as not to be led out of the way, by the variety of prospects, edifices, and ruins which solicit us, it would be a nonsensical piece of saint-errantry, to shut our eyes.

But let us not lose sight of the argument in pursuit of the simile.

Let us remember, various as our excursions are—that we have still set our faces towards Jerusalem—that we have a place of rest and happiness, towards which

## SERMON II. 35

we hasten, and that the way to get there is not so much to please our hearts, as to improve them in virtue;—that mirth and feasting are usually no friends to achievements of this kind—but that a season of affliction is in some sort a season of piety—not only because our sufferings are apt to put us in mind of our sins, but that by the check and interruption which they give to our pursuits, they allow us what the hurry and bustle of the world too often deny us,—and that is, a little time for reflection, which is all that most of us want to make us wiser and better men;—that at certain times it is so necessary a man's mind should be turned towards itself, that rather than want occasions, he had better purchase them at the expence of his present happiness.—He had better, as the text expresses it, *go to the house of*

D 2                   mourn-

35      S E R M O N II.

*mourning*, where he will meet with something to subdue his passions, than to the house of feasting, where the joy and gaiety of the place is likely to excite them: That whereas the entertainments and carefes of the one place, expose his heart and lay it open to temptations—the sorrows of the other defend it, and as naturally shut them from it. So strange and unaccountable a creature is man! he is so framed, that he cannot but pursue happiness—and yet unless he is made sometimes miserable, how apt is he to mistake the way which can only lead him to the accomplishment of his own wishes!

This is the full force of the wise man's declaration.—But to do farther justice to his words, I will endeavour to bring the subject still nearer.—For which purpose, it will be necessary to stop here,  
and

## SERMON II. 37

and take a transient view of the two places here referred to,—the house of mourning, and the house of feasting. Give me leave therefore, I beseech you, to recal both of them for a moment to your imaginations, that from thence I may appeal to your hearts, how faithfully, and upon what good grounds, the effects and natural operations of each upon our minds are intimated in the text.

And first, let us look into the house of feasting.

And here, to be as fair and candid as possible in the description of this, we will not take it from the worst originals, such as are opened merely for the sale of virtue, and so calculated for the end, that the disguise each is under not only gives power safely to drive on the bar-

D 3 gain,

38      S E R M O N   II.

gain, but safely to carry it into execu-  
tion too.

This we will not suppose to be the case—nor let us even imagine the house of feasting to be such a scene of intemperance and excess, as the house of feasting does often exhibit—but let us take it from one, as little exceptionable as we can—where there is, or at least appears, nothing really criminal—but where every thing seems to be kept within the visible bounds of moderation and sobriety.

Imagine then such a house of feasting, where, either by consent or invitation, a number of each sex is drawn together for no other purpose but the enjoyment and mutual entertainment of each other, which we will suppose shall arise

## SERMON II. 39

arise from no other pleasures but what custom authorises, and religion does not absolutely forbid.

Before we enter—let us examine, what must be the sentiments of each individual previous to his arrival, and we shall find that however they may differ from one another in tempers and opinions, that every one seems to agree in this—that as he is going to a house dedicated to joy and mirth, it was fit he should divest himself of whatever was likely to contradict that intention, or be inconsistent with it—That for this purpose, he had left his cares—his serious thoughts—and his moral reflections behind him, and was come forth from home with only such dispositions and gaiety of heart as suited the occasion, and promoted the intended mirth and

jollity of the place. With this preparation of mind, which is as little as can be supposed, since it will amount to no more than a desire in each to render himself an acceptable guest,—let us conceive them entering into the house of feasting, with hearts set loose from grave restraints, and open to the expectations of receiving pleasure. It is not necessary, as I premised, to bring intemperance into this scene—or to suppose such an excess in the gratification of the appetites as shall ferment the blood and set the desires in a flame:—Let us admit no more of it therefore, than will gently stir them, and fit them for the impressions which so benevolent a commerce will naturally excite. In this disposition, thus wrought upon beforehand and already improved to this purpose,—take notice how mechanically the thoughts and

S E R M O N II. 41

and spirits rise—how soon, and insensibly they are got above the pitch and first bounds which cooler hours would have marked.

When the gay and smiling aspect of things has begun to leave the passages to a man's heart thus thoughtlessly unguarded—when kind and caressing looks of every object without, that can flatter his senses, have conspired with the enemy within, to betray him, and put him off his defence,—when music likewise hath lent her aid, and tried her power upon the passions,—when the voice of singing men, and the voice of singing women, with the sound of the viol and the lute, have broke in upon his soul, and in some tender notes have touched the secret springs of rapture,—that moment let us dissect and look into his heart,—

see

## 42      S E R M O N II.

see how vain ! how weak ! how empty a thing it is ! Look through its several recesses,—those pure mansions formed for the reception of innocence and virtue—sad spectacle ! Behold those fair inhabitants now dispossessed — turned out of their sacred dwellings, to make room—for what ?—at the best for levity and indiscretion—perhaps for folly —it may be for more impure guests, which possibly in so general a riot of the mind and senses, may take occasion to enter unsuspected at the same time.

In a scene and disposition, thus described—can the most cautious say—thus far shall my desires go—and no farther? or will the coolest and most circumspect say, when pleasure has taken full possession of his heart, that no thought nor purpose shall arise there, which he would

## S E R M O N II. 43

would have concealed?—In those loose and unguarded moments the imagination is not always at command—in spite of reason and reflection, it will forcibly carry him sometimes whither he would not—like the unclean spirit, in the parent's sad description of his child's case, which took him, and oft-times cast him into the fire to destroy him, and where-soever it taketh him it teareth him, and hardly departeth from him.

But this, you'll say, is the worst account of what the mind may suffer here.

Why may we not make more favourable suppositions?—that numbers, by exercise and custom to such encounters, learn gradually to despise and triumph over them;—that the minds of many are not so susceptible of warm impressions, or so badly fortified against them,  
that

## 44      S E R M O N   II.

that pleasure should easily corrupt or soften them ;—that it would be hard to suppose, of the great multitudes which daily throng and press into this house of feasting, but that numbers come out of it again, with all the innocence with which they entered ;—and that if both sexes are included in the computation, what *fair* examples shall we see of many of so pure and chaste a turn of mind—  
that the house of feasting, with all its charms and temptations, was never able to excite a thought, or awaken an inclination which virtue need to blush at—  
or which the most scrupulous conscience might not support. God forbid we should say otherwise :—No doubt, numbers of all ages escape unhurt, and get off this dangerous sea without shipwreck. Yet are they not to be reckoned amongst the more fortunate adventurers ?—and though

## S E R M O N II. 45

though one would not absolutely prohibit the attempt, or be so cynical as to condemn every one who tries it, since there are so many, I suppose, who cannot well do otherwise, and whose condition and situation in life unavoidably force them upon it—yet we may be allowed to describe this fair and flattering coast—we may point out the unsuspected dangers of it, and warn the unwary passenger, where they lie. We may shew him what hazards his youth and inexperience will run, how little he can gain by the venture, and how much wiser and better it would be (as is implied in the text) to seek occasions rather to improve his little stock of virtue than incautiously expose it to so unequal a chance, where the best he can hope is to return safe with what treasure he carried out—but where probably, he may be so unfortunate

nate

## 46      S E R M O N   II.

nate as to lose it all—be lost himself, and undone for ever.

Thus much for the house of feasting; which by the way, though generally open at other times of the year throughout the world, is supposed in christian countries, now every where to be universally shut up. And, in truth, I have been more full in my cautions against it, not only as reason requires,—but in reverence to this season \*, wherein our church exacts a more particular forbearance and self-denial in this point, and thereby adds to the restraints upon pleasure and entertainments which this representation of things has suggested against them already.

Here then, let us turn aside from this gay scene; and suffer me to take you with

\* Preached in Lent.

## S E R M O N II. 47

with me for a moment to one much fitter for your meditation. Let us go into the house of mourning, made so by such afflictions as have been brought in, merely by the common cross accidents and disasters to which our condition is exposed,—where, perhaps the aged parents sit broken-hearted, pierced to their souls with the folly and indiscretion of a thankless child—the child of their prayers, in whom all their hopes and expectations centered:—perhaps a more affecting scene—a virtuous family lying pinched with want, where the unfortunate support of it having long struggled with a train of misfortunes, and bravely fought up against them—is now piteously borne down at the last—overwhelmed with a cruel blow which no forecast or frugality could have prevented.—O GOD! look upon his afflictions—Behold him distracted with

## 48      S E R M O N   II.

with many sorrows, surrounded with the tender pledges of his love, and the partner of his cares—without bread to give them, unable, from the remembrance of better days, to dig;—to beg, ashamed.

When we enter into the house of mourning such as this—it is impossible to insult the unfortunate even with an improper look—Under whatever levity and dissipation of heart, such objects catch our eyes,—they catch likewise our attentions, collect and call home our scattered thoughts, and exercise them with wisdom. A transient scene of distress, such as is here sketched, how soon does it furnish materials to set the mind at work? how necessarily does it engage it to the consideration of the miseries and misfortunes, the dangers and calamities to which the life of man is subject?

By

## SERMON II. 49

By holding up such a glass before it, it forces the mind to see and reflect upon the vanity,—the perishing condition and uncertain tenure of every thing in this world. From reflections of this serious cast, how insensibly do the thoughts carry us farther?—and from considering what we are—what kind of world we live in, and what evils befall us in it, how naturally do they set us to look forwards at what possibly we shall be?—for what kind of world we are intended —what evils may befall us there—and what provision we should make against them here, whilst we have time and opportunity.

If these lessons are so inseparable from the house of mourning here supposed—we shall find it a still more instructive school of wisdom when we take a view

50      S E R M O N   II.

of the place in that more affecting light in which the wise man seems to confine it in the text, in which, by the house of mourning, I believe, he means that particular scene of sorrow where there is lamentation and mourning for the dead.

Turn in hither, I beseech you, for a moment. Behold a dead man ready to be carried out, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. Perhaps a more affecting spectacle—a kind and indulgent father of a numerous family, lies breathless — snatched away in the strength of his age — torn in an evil hour from his children and the bosom of a disconsolate wife.

Behold much people of the city gathered together to mix their tears, with settled sorrow in their looks, going heavily

## S E R M O N II. 51

vily along to the house of mourning, to perform that last melancholy office, which when the debt of nature is paid, we are called upon to pay each other.

If this sad occasion, which leads him there, has not done it already, take notice, to what a serious and devout frame of mind every man is reduced, the moment he enters this gate of affliction. The busy and fluttering spirits, which in the house of mirth were wont to transport him from one diverting object to another—see how they are fallen! how peaceably they are laid! in this gloomy mansion full of shades and uncomfortable damps to seize the soul—see, the light and easy heart, which never knew what it was to think before, how pensive it is now, how soft, how susceptible,

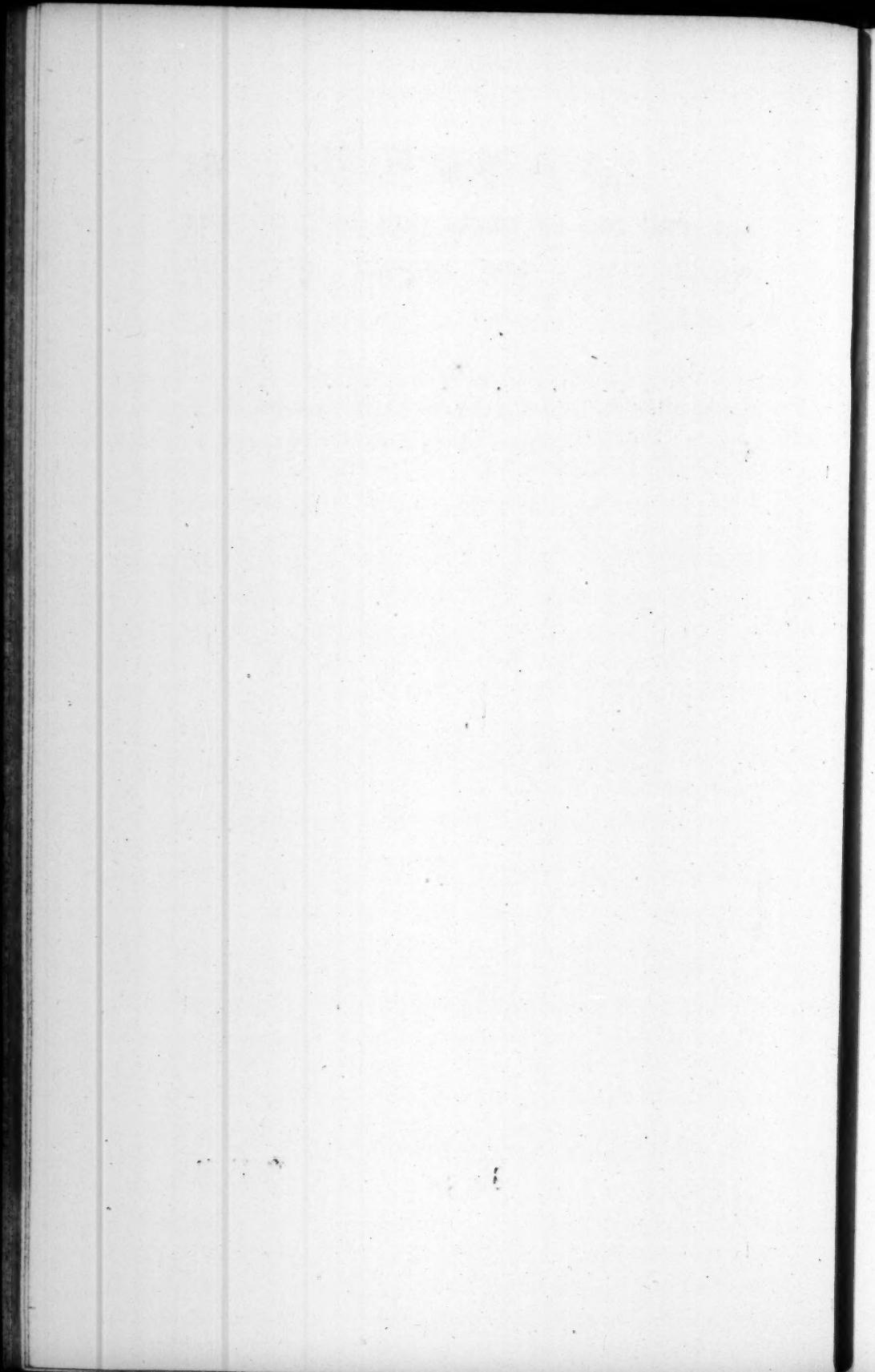
## 52      S E R M O N   I I.

how full of religious impressions, how deeply it is smitten with sense and with a love of virtue ! Could we, in this crisis, whilst this empire of reason and religion lasts, and the heart is thus exercised with wisdom and busied with heavenly contemplations—could we see it naked as it is—stripped of its passions, unspotted by the world, and regardless of its pleasures—we might then safely rest our cause upon this single evidence, and appeal to the most sensual, whether Solomon has not made a just determination here, in favour of the house of mourning?—not for its own sake, but as it is fruitful in virtue, and becomes the occasion of so much good. Without this end, sorrow I own has no use but to shorten a man's days —nor can gravity, with all its studied solemnity of look and carriage, serve

S E R M O N II.      53

any end but to make one half of the world merry, and impose upon the other.

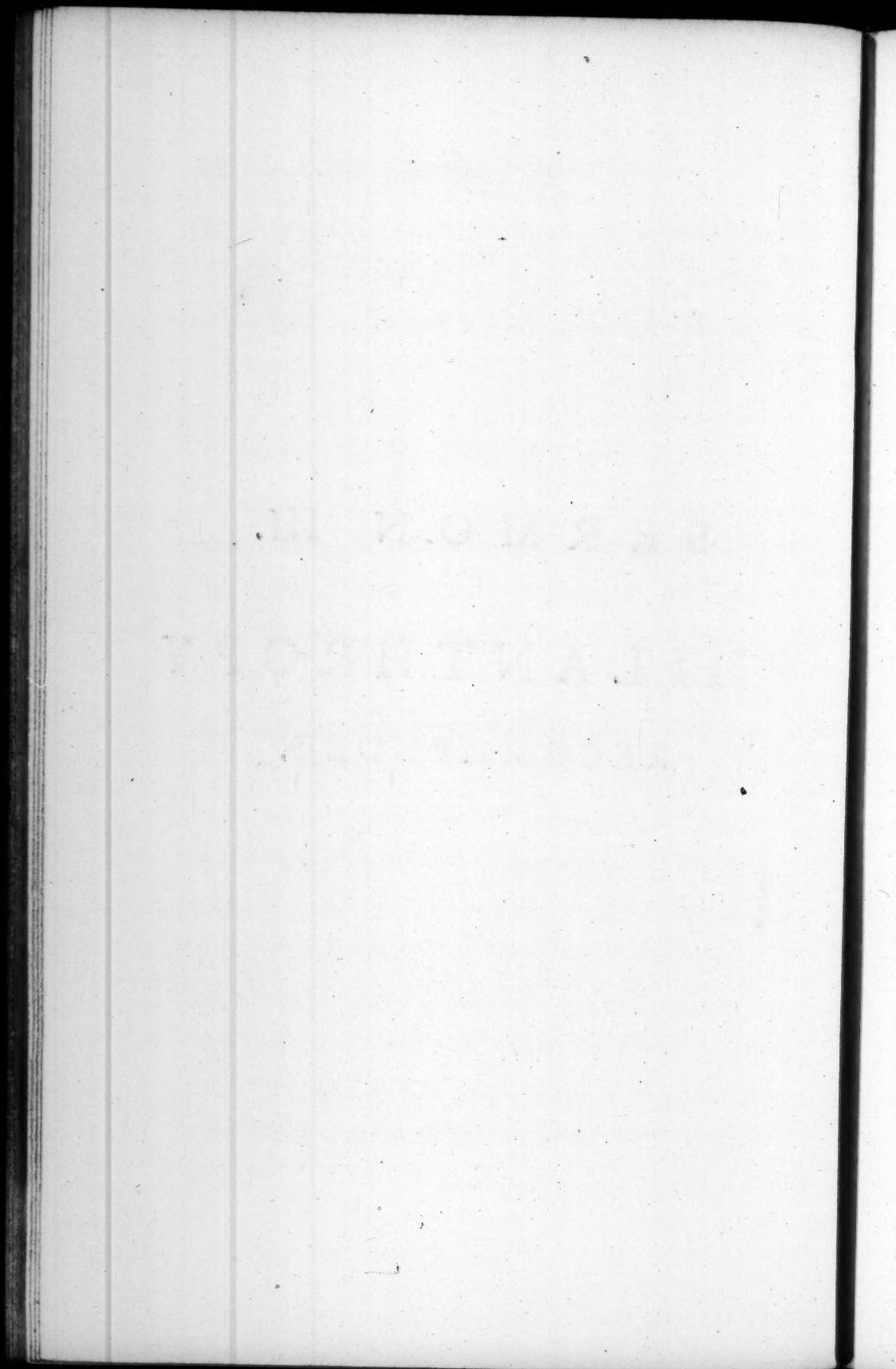
Consider what has been said, and may God of his mercy bless you ! Amen.



S E R M O N III.

P H I L A N T H R O P Y  
R E C O M M E N D E D .

E 4



## S E R M O N III.

LUKE x. 36, 37.

*Which now of these three, thinkest thou,  
was neighbour unto him that fell  
amongst the thieves?—And he said,  
He that shewed mercy on him. Then  
said Jesus unto him—Go, and do thou  
likewise.*

**I**N the foregoing verses of this chapter, the Evangelist relates, that a certain lawyer stood up and tempted JESUS, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?—To which enquiry, our SAVIOUR, as his manner was, when any ensnaring question was put to him,

## 58      S E R M O N III.

him, which he saw proceeded more from a design to entangle him, than an honest view of getting information—instead of giving a direct answer, which might afford a handle to malice, or at best serve only to gratify an impertinent humour—he immediately retorts the question upon the man who asked it, and unavoidably puts him upon the necessity of answering himself ;—and, as in the present case, the particular profession of the enquirer, and his supposed general knowledge of all other branches of learning, left no room to suspect he could be ignorant of the true answer to this question, and especially of what every one knew was delivered upon that head by their great Legislator, our SAVIOUR therefore refers him to his own memory of what he had found there in the course of his studies—What is written in the law,

### S E R M O N III. 59

law, how readest thou?—Upon which the enquirer reciting the general heads of our duty to GOD and MAN, as delivered in the 18th of Leviticus and the 6th of Deuteronomy,—namely—  
*That we should worship the Lord our God with all our hearts, and love our neighbour as ourselves;* our blessed SAVIOUR tells him, he had answered right, and if he followed that lesson, he could not fail of the blessing he seemed desirous to inherit.—*This do, and thou shalt live.*

But he, as the context tells us, willing to justify himself—willing possibly to gain more credit in the conference, or hoping perhaps to hear such a partial and narrow definition of the word *neighbour* as would suit his own principles, and justify some particular oppressions

## 60      S E R M O N III.

sions of his own, or those of which his whole order lay under an accusation—says unto JESUS in the 29th verse—*And who is my neighbour?* Though the demand at first sight may seem utterly trifling, yet was it far from being so in fact. For according as you understood the term in a more or less restrained sense—it produced many necessary variations in the duties you owed from that relation.—Our blessed SAVIOUR, to rectify any partial and pernicious mistake in this matter, and to place at once this duty of the love of our neighbour upon its true bottom of philanthropy and universal kindness, makes answer to the proposed question, not by any far-fetched refinement from the schools of the Rabbies, which might have sooner silenced than convinced the man—but by a direct appeal to human nature, in an instance

### S E R M O N III. 61

instance he relates of a man falling amongst thieves, left in the greatest distress imaginable, till by chance a Samaritan, an utter stranger, coming where he was, by an act of great goodness and compassion, not only relieved him at present, but took him under his protection, and generously provided for his future safety.

On the close of which engaging account—our SAVIOUR appeals to the man's own heart in the first verse of the text—*Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell amongst the thieves?* and instead of drawing the inference himself, leaves him to decide in favour of so noble a principle so evidently founded in mercy.—The lawyer, struck with the truth and justice of the doctrine, and frankly acknowledging

## 62      S E R M O N III.

ing the force of it, our blessed SAVIOUR concludes the debate with a short admonition, that he would practise what he had approved—and go and imitate that fair example of universal benevolence which it had set before him.

In the remaining part of the discourse I shall follow the same plan ; and therefore shall beg leave to enlarge first upon the story itself, with such reflections as will arise from it ; and conclude, as our SAVIOUR has done, with the same exhortation to kindness and humanity which so naturally falls from it.

A certain man, says our SAVIOUR, went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and departed, leaving him half dead. There is something in our nature

nature which engages us to take part in every accident to which man is subject, from what cause foever it may have happened ; but in such calamities as a man has fallen into through mere misfortune, to be charged upon no fault or indiscretion of himself, there is something then so truly interesting, that at the first sight we generally make them our own, not altogether from a reflection that they might have been or may be so, but oftener from a certain generosity and tenderness of nature which disposes us for compassion, abstracted from all considerations of self : so that without any observable act of the will, we suffer with the unfortunate, and feel a weight upon our spirits we know not why, on seeing the most common instances of their distress. But where the spectacle is uncommonly tragical, and complicated

## 64      S E R M O N    III.

plicated with many circumstances of misery, the mind is then taken captive at once, and *were* it inclined to it, has no power to make resistance, but surrenders itself to all the tender emotions of pity and deep concern. So that when one considers this friendly part of our nature without looking farther, one would think it impossible for man to look upon misery without finding himself in some measure attached to the interest of him who suffers it.—I say, one would think it impossible—for there are some tempers—how shall I describe them?—formed either of such impenetrable matter, or wrought up by habitual selfishness to such an utter insensibility of what becomes of the fortunes of their fellow-creatures, as if they were not partakers of the same nature, or had no lot or connection at all with the species.

Of

### S E R M O N III. 65

Of this character, our SAVIOUR produces two disgraceful instances in the behaviour of a Priest and a Levite, whom in this account he represents as coming to the place where the unhappy man was ;—both passing by without either stretching forth a hand to assist, or uttering a word to comfort him in his distress.

And by chance there came down a certain priest !—merciful God ! that a teacher of thy religion should ever want humanity—or that a man whose head might be thought full of the one, should have a heart void of the other !—This however was the case before us—and though in theory one would scarce suspect that the least pretence to religion, and an open disregard to so main a part of it, could ever meet together in one

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F

person ;

## 66      S E R M O N    III.

person ; yet in fact it is no fictitious character.

Look into the world—how often do you behold a Fordid wretch, whose strait heart is open to no man's affliction, taking shelter behind an appearance of piety, and putting on the garb of religion, which none but the merciful and compassionate have a title to wear. Take notice with what sanctity he goes to the end of his days, in the same selfish track in which he at first set out—turning neither to the right hand nor to the left—but plods on—pores all his life long upon the ground, as if afraid to look up, lest peradventure he should see aught which might turn him one moment out of that straight line where interest is carrying him :—or if, by chance, he stumbles upon a hapless object

## SERMON III. 67

ject of distress, which threatens such a disaster to him—like the man here represented, *devoutly* passing by on the other side, as if unwilling to trust himself to the impressions of nature, or hazard the inconveniences which pity might lead him into upon the occasion.

There is but one stroke wanting in this picture of an unmerciful man to render the character utterly odious, and that our SAVIOUR gives it in the following instance he relates upon it. And likewise, says he, *a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked at him.* It was not a transient oversight, the hasty or ill-advised neglect of an unconsidering humour, with which the best-disposed are sometimes overtaken, and led on beyond the point where otherwise they would have wished to stop—No!—on the

## 58      S E R M O N    III.

contrary, it had all the aggravation of a deliberate act of insensibility proceeding from a hard heart. When he was at the place, he came and looked at him,—considered his misfortunes, gave time for reason and nature to have awoke—saw the imminent danger he was in—and the pressing necessity of immediate help, which so violent a case called aloud for;—and after all—turned aside, and unmercifully left him to all the distresses of his condition.

In all unmerciful actions the worst of men pay this compliment at least to humanity, as to endeavour to wear as much of the appearance of it, as the case will well let them;—so that in the hardest acts a man shall be guilty of, he has some motives, true or false, always ready to offer, either to satisfy himself or the world,

## S E R M O N III. 69

world, and, God knows, too often to impose both upon the one and the other. And therefore it would be no hard matter here to give a probable guess at what passed in the Levite's mind in the present case, and shew, was it necessary, by what kind of casuistry he settled the matter with his conscience as he passed by, and guarded all the passages to his heart against the inroads which pity might attempt to make upon the occasion.—But it is painful to dwell long upon this disagreeable part of the story; I therefore hasten to the concluding incident of it, which is so amiable, that one cannot easily be too copious in reflections upon it.—And behold, says our SAVIOUR, a certain Samaritan as he journeyed came where he was; and when he saw him he had compassion on him—and went to him—bound up his wounds,

F 3      pouring

## 70 SERMON III.

pouring in oil and wine—set him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. I suppose it will be scarce necessary here to remind you that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans—an old religious grudge—the worst of all grudges, had wrought such a dislike between both people, that they held themselves mutually discharged not only from all offices of friendship and kindness, but even from the most common acts of courtesy and good manners. This operated so strongly in our SAVIOUR's time, that the woman of Samaria seemed astonished that he, being a Jew, should *ask* water of her who was a Samaritan;—so that with such a prepossession, however distressful the case of the unfortunate man was, and how reasonably soever he might plead for pity from another man, there was little

### S E R M O N III. 71

little aid or consolation to be looked for from so unpromising a quarter. Alas ! after I have been twice passed by, neglected by men of my own nation and religion, bound by so many ties to assist me, left here friendless and unpitied both by a Priest and a Levite, men whose profession and superior advantages of knowledge could not leave them in the dark in what manner they should discharge this debt which my condition claims —after this—what hopes ? what expectations from a passenger, not only a stranger, —but a Samaritan, released from all obligations to me, and by a national dislike, inflamed by mutual ill offices, now made my enemy, and more likely to rejoice at the evils which have fallen upon me, than to stretch forth a hand to save me from them !

'Tis no unnatural soliloquy to imagine ; but the actions of generous and

compassionate tempers baffle all little reasonings about them.—True charity, in the Apostle's description, as it is kind, and is not easily provoked, so it manifested this character here ;—for we find when he came where he was, and beheld his distress,—all the unfriendly passions, which at another time might have rose within him, now utterly forsook him and fled : when he saw his misfortunes—he forgot his enmity towards the man,—dropped all the prejudices which education had planted against him, and in the room of them, all that was good and compassionate was suffered to speak in his behalf.

In benevolent natures the impulse to pity is so sudden, that like instruments of music which obey the touch—the objects which are fitted to excite such impressions work so instantaneous an effect,  
that

## S E R M O N III. 73

that you would think the will was scarce concerned, and that the mind was altogether passive in the sympathy which her own goodness has excited. The truth is —the soul is generally in such cases so busily taken up and wholly engrossed by the object of pity, that she does not attend to her own operations, or take leisure to examine the principles upon which she acts. So that the Samaritan, though the moment he saw him he had compassion on him, yet, sudden as the emotion is represented, you are not to imagine that it was mechanical, but that there was a settled principle of humanity and goodness which operated within him, and influenced not only the first impulse of kindness, but the continuation of it throughout the rest of so engaging a behaviour. And because it is a pleasure to look into a good mind, and trace out as

far

## 74      S E R M O N   H I.

far as one is able, what passes within it on such occasions, I shall beg leave for a moment to state an account of what was likely to pass in his, and in what manner so distressful a case would necessarily work upon such a disposition.

As he approached the place where the unfortunate man lay, the instant he beheld him, no doubt some such train of reflections as this would rise in his mind.

“ Good God! what a spectacle of misery  
“ do I behold! —— a man stripped of  
“ his raiment—wounded—lying lan-  
“ guishing before me upon the ground,  
“ just ready to expire,—without the  
“ comfort of a friend to support him in  
“ his last agonies, or the prospect of a  
“ hand to close his eyes when his pains  
“ are over. But perhaps my concern  
“ should lessen when I reflect on the re-  
“ lations

## SERMON III.

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“lations in which we stand to each other  
“—that he is a Jew, and I a Samaritan.  
“—But are we not still both men;  
“partakers of the same nature—and  
“subject to the same evils?—let me  
“change conditions with him for a  
“moment, and consider, had his lot been  
“fallen me as I journeyed in the way;  
“what measure I should have expected  
“at his hand.—Should I wish when he  
“beheld me wounded and half-dead  
“that he should shut up his bowels of  
“compassion from me, and double the  
“weight of my miseries by passing by  
“and leaving them unpitied?—But I  
“am a stranger to the man;—be it so.  
“—but I am no stranger to his condi-  
“tion—misfortunes are of no particular  
“tribe or nation, but belong to us all;  
“and have a general claim upon us,  
“without distinction of climate, coun-  
“try,

96 SERMON III.

“ try, or religion. Besides, though I am  
“ a stranger—’tis no fault of his that I  
“ do not know him, and therefore  
“ unequalitable he should suffer by it:  
“ —Had I known him, possibly I should  
“ have had cause to love and pity him  
“ the more—for aught I know, he is  
“ some one of uncommon merit, whose  
“ life is rendered still more precious, as  
“ the lives and happiness of others may  
“ be involved in it: perhaps at this in-  
“ stant that he lies here forsaken, in all  
“ this misery, a whole virtuous family is  
“ joyfully looking for his return, and  
“ affectionately counting the hours of  
“ his delay. Oh ! did they know  
“ what evil had befallen him——how  
“ would they fly to succour him!—  
“ Let me then hasten to supply those  
“ tender offices of binding up his  
“ wounds, and carrying him to a place  
“ of

## SERMON III.

77

“ of safety—or if that assistance comes  
“ too late, I shall comfort him at least  
“ in his last hour—and, if I can do no-  
“ thing else,—I shall soften his misfor-  
“ tunes by dropping a tear of pity over  
“ them.”

’Tis almost necessary to imagine the good Samaritan was influenced by some such thoughts as these, from the uncommon generosity of his behaviour, which is represented by our SAVIOUR operating like the warm zeal of a brother, mixed with the affectionate discretion and care of a parent, who was not satisfied with taking him under his protection, and supplying his present wants, but in looking forwards for him, and taking care that his wants should be supplied when he should be gone, and no longer near to befriend him.

I think

## 78 SERMON III.

I think there needs no stronger argument to prove how universally and deeply the seeds of this virtue of compassion are planted in the heart of man, than in the pleasure we take in such representations of it: and though some men have represented human nature in other colours (though to what end I know not) yet the matter of fact is so strong against them, that from the general propensity to pity the unfortunate, we express that sensation by the word *humanity*, as if it was inseparable from our nature. That it is not *inseparable*, I have allowed in the former part of this discourse, from some reproachful instances of selfish tempers, which seem to take part in nothing beyond themselves; yet I am persuaded, and affirm 'tis still so great and noble a part of our nature, that a man must do great

## S E R M O N III. 79

great violence to himself, and suffer many a painful conflict, before he has brought himself to a different disposition.

'Tis observable in the foregoing account, that when the priest came to the place where he was, he passed by on the other side—he might have passed by, you'll say, without turning aside.—No, there is a secret shame which attends every act of inhumanity not to be conquered in the hardest natures; so that, as in other cases, so especially in this, many a man will do a cruel act, who at the same time will blush to look you in the face, and is forced to turn aside before he can have a heart to execute his purpose.

Inconsistent creature that a man is! who at that instant that he does what is

## 80 SERMON III.

wrong, is not able to withhold his testimony to what is good and praise-worthy.

I have now done with the parable, which was the first part proposed to be considered in this discourse; and should proceed to the second, which so naturally falls from it, of exhorting you, as our SAVIOUR did the lawyer upon it, *to go and do so likewise*: but I have been so copious in my reflections upon the story itself, that I find I have insensibly incorporated into them almost all that I should have said here in recommending so amiable an example; by which means I have unawares anticipated the task I proposed. I shall therefore detain you no longer than with a single remark upon the subject in general, which is this: 'Tis observable in many places of scripture, that our blessed SAVIOUR, in describing the day

### S E R M O N III.      81

day of judgment, does it in such a manner, as if the great enquiry then, was to relate principally to this one virtue of compassion—and as if our final sentence at that solemnity was to be pronounced exactly according to the degrees of it.

“ I was a hungry and ye gave me meat  
“ —thirsty and ye gave me drink—na-  
“ ked and ye clothed me—I was sick  
“ and ye visited me—in prison and ye  
“ came unto me.” Not that we are to imagine from thence, as if any other good or evil action should then be overlooked by the eye of the All-seeing Judge, but barely to intimate to us, that a charitable and benevolent disposition is so principal and ruling a part of a man’s character, as to be a considerable test by itself of the whole frame and temper of his mind, with which all other virtues

## 82      S E R M O N   III.

and vices respectively rise and fall, and will almost necessarily be connected.— Tell me therefore of a compassionate man, you represent to me a man of a thousand other good qualities—on whom I can depend—whom I may safely trust with my wife—my children, my fortune and reputation—'Tis for this, as the Apostle argues from the same principle—“that he will not commit adultery—that he will not kill—“that he will not steal—that he will “not bear false witness.” That is, the sorrows which are stirred up in men's hearts by such trespasses are so tenderly felt by a compassionate man, that it is not in his power or his nature to commit them.

So that well might he conclude, that charity, by which he means, the love  
to

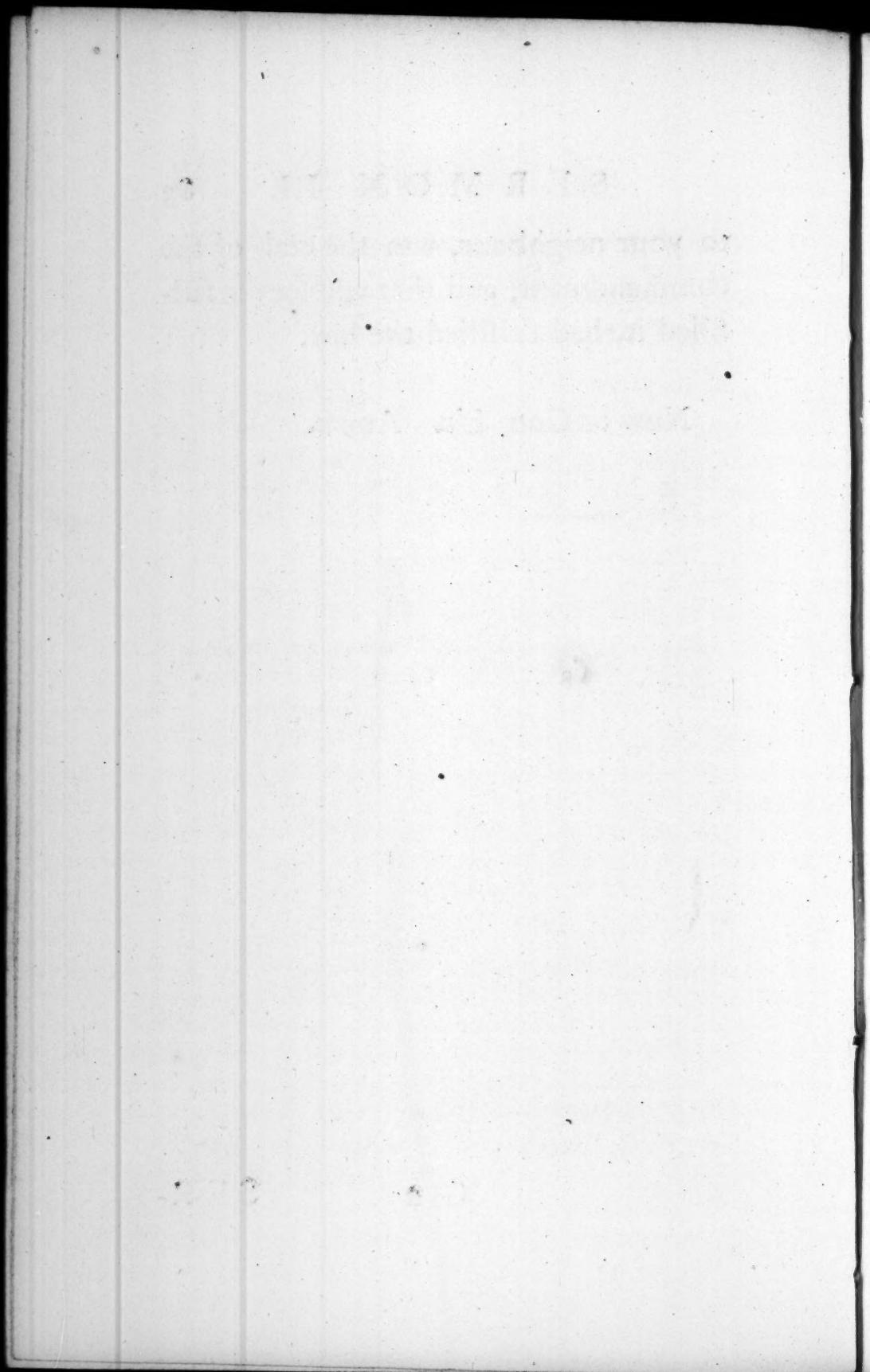
S E R M O N III. 83

to your neighbour, was the end of the commandment, and that whosoever fulfilled it, had fulfilled the law.

Now to God, &c. Amen.

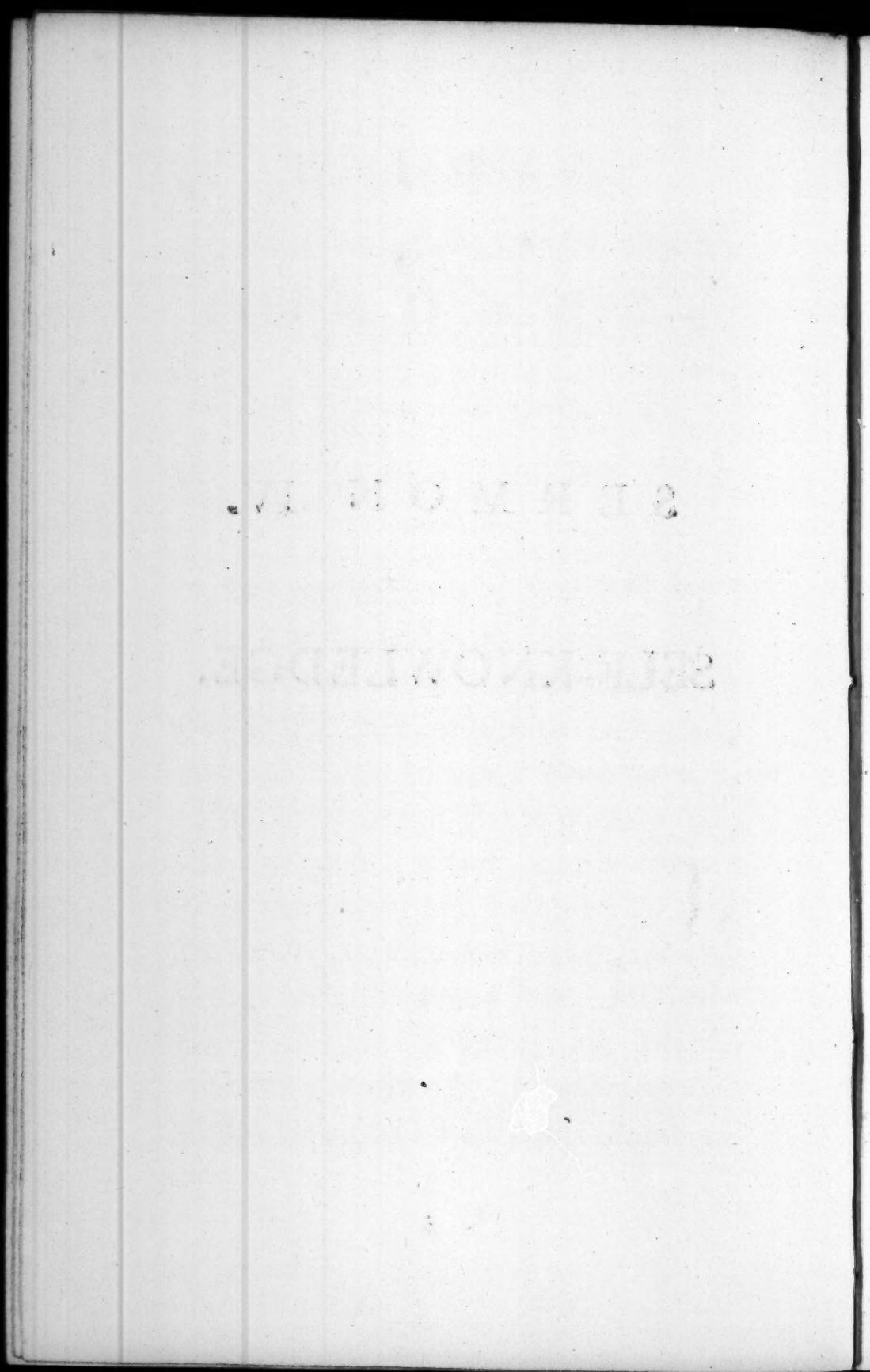
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S E R-



S E R M O N IV.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.



## S E R M O N IV.

**2 SAMUEL XII. 7.** 1st part.

*And Nathan said unto David, Thou art  
the man.*

**T**H E R E is no historical passage in scripture, which gives a more remarkable instance of the deceitfulness of the heart of man to itself, and of how little we truly know of ourselves, than this, wherein David is convicted out of his own mouth, and is led by the prophet to condemn and pronounce a severe judgment upon another, for an act of injustice, which he had passed over in himself, and possibly reconciled to his own conscience. To know one's self, one would think could be no very diffi-

## 88     S E R M O N IV.

cult lesson;—for who you'll say can well be truly ignorant of himself and the true disposition of his own heart? If a man thinks at all, he cannot be a stranger to what passes there—he must be conscious of his own thoughts and desires, he must remember his past pursuits, and the true springs and motives which in general have directed the actions of his life: he may hang out false colours and deceive the world, but how can a man deceive himself? That a man can—is evident, because he daily does so.—Scripture tells us, and gives us many historical proofs of it, besides this to which the text refers—“that the “heart of man is treacherous to itself “and *deceitful above all things,*” and experience and every hour’s commerce with the world confirms the truth of this seeming paradox, “That though man is “the

“ the only creature endowed with reflection, and consequently qualified to know the most of himself—yet so it happens, that he generally knows the least—and with all the power which God has given him of turning his eyes inward upon himself, and taking notice of the chain of his own thoughts and desires—yet, in fact, is generally so inattentive, but always so partial an observer of what passes, that he is as much, nay often, a much greater stranger to his own disposition and true character, than all the world besides.”

By what means he is brought under so manifest a delusion, and how he suffers himself to be so grossly imposed upon in a point which he is capable of knowing so much better than others, is not hard to

## 90      S E R M O N . IV.

to give an account of, nor need we seek farther for it, than amongst the causes which are every day perverting his reason, and misleading him. We are deceived in judging of ourselves, just as we are in judging of other things, when our passions and inclinations are called in as counsellors, and we suffer ourselves to see and reason just so far and no farther than they give us leave. How hard do we find it to pass an equitable and sound judgment in a matter where our interest is deeply concerned!—and even where there is the remotest consideration of self, connected with the point before us, what a strange bias does it hang upon our mind, and how difficult is it to disengage our judgments entirely from it! with what reluctance are we brought to think evil of a friend whom we have long loved and esteemed, and though there

## S E R M O N IV.      91

there happens to be strong appearances against him, how apt we are to overlook or put favourable constructions upon them, and even sometimes, when our zeal and friendship transport us, to assign the best and kindest motives for the worst and most unjustifiable parts of his conduct.

We are still worse casuists, and the deceit is proportionably stronger with a man, when he is going to judge of himself—that dearest of all parties,—so closely connected with him—so much and so long beloved—of whom he has so early conceived the highest opinion and esteem, and with whose merit he has all along, no doubt, found so much reason to be contented. It is not an easy matter to be severe, where there is such an impulse to be kind, or to efface at once

Once all the tender impressions in favour of so old a friend, which disabled us from thinking of him as he is, and seeing him in the light, may be, in which every one else sees him.

So that however easy this knowledge of one's self may appear at first sight, it is otherwise when we come to examine; since not only in practice, but even in speculation and theory, we find it one of the hardest and most painful lessons. Some of the earliest instructors of mankind, no doubt, found it so too, and for that reason, soon saw the necessity of laying such a stress upon this great precept of self-knowledge, which for its excellent wisdom and usefulness, many of them supposed to be a divine direction; that it came down from Heaven, and comprehended the whole circle both

of

of the knowledge and the duty of man. And indeed their zeal might easily be allowed in so high an encomium upon the attainment of a virtue, the want of which so often baffled their instructions, and rendered their endeavours of reforming the heart vain and useless. For who could think of a reformation of the faults within him, who knew not where they lay, or could set about correcting, till he had first come to a sense of the defects which required it ?

But this was a point always much easier recommended by public instructors than shewn how to be put in practice : and therefore others, who equally sought the reformation of mankind, observing that this direct road which led to it was guarded on all sides by self-love, and consequently very difficult to open access,

## 54      S E R M O N    IV.

cess, soon found out that a different and more artful course was requisite ; as they had not strength to remove this flattering passion which stood in their way and blocked up all the passages to the heart, they endeavoured by stratagem to get beyond it, and by a skilful address, if possible, to deceive it. This gave rise to the early manner of conveying their instructions in parables, fables, and such sort of indirect applications, which tho' they could not conquer this principle of self-love, yet often laid it asleep, or at least over-reached it for a few moments, till a just judgment could be procured.

The prophet Nathan seems to have been a great master in this way of address. David had greatly displeased God by two grievous sins which he had committed, and the prophet's commission

was

S E R M O N IV. 95

was to go and bring him to a conviction of them, and touch his heart with a sense of guilt for what he had done against the honour and life of Uriah.

The holy man knew, that was it any one's case but David's own, no man would have been so quick-sighted in discerning the nature of the injury,—more ready to have redressed it, or who would have felt more compassion for the party who had suffered it, than he himself.

Instead therefore of declaring the real intention of his errand, by a direct accusation and reproof for the crimes he had committed ; he comes to him with a fictitious complaint of a cruel act of injustice done by another, and accordingly he frames a case, not so parallel

to

to David's as he supposed would awaken his suspicion, and prevent a patient and candid hearing, and yet not so void of resemblance in the main circumstances, as to fail of striking him when shewn in a proper light.

And Nathan came, and said unto him,  
“ There were two men in one city, the  
“ one rich and the other poor—the rich  
“ man had exceeding many flocks and  
“ herds, but the poor man had nothing,  
“ save one little ewe lamb which he had  
“ bought and nourished up—and it grew  
“ up together with him and with his  
“ children—it did eat of his own meat,  
“ and drink of his own cup, and lay in  
“ his bosom, and was unto him as a  
“ daughter—and there came a traveller  
“ unto the rich man, and he spared to  
“ take of his own flock and of his own  
“ herd

S E R M O N IV.      97

"herd to dress for the wayfaring man,  
"that was come unto him, but took  
"the poor man's lamb and dressed it  
"for the man that was come unto him."

The case was drawn up with great judgment and beauty,—the several minute circumstances which heightened the injury truly affecting,—and so strongly urged, that it would have been impossible for any man with a previous sense of guilt upon his mind, to have defended himself from some degree of remorse, which it must naturally have excited:

The story, though it spoke only of the injustice and oppressive act of another man—yet it pointed to what he had lately done himself, with all the circumstances of its aggravation;—and

VOL. I.

H

withal,

## 98      S E R M O N    IV.

withal, the whole was so tenderly addressed to the heart and passions, as to kindle at once the utmost horror and indignation. And so it did,—but not against the proper person. In his transport he forgot himself;—his anger greatly kindled against the man,—and he said unto Nathan, “ As the LORD “ liveth, the man that hath done this “ thing shall surely die, and he shall “ restore the lamb fourfold, because he “ did this thing, and because he had no “ pity.”

It can scarce be doubted here, but that David’s anger was *real*, and that he was what he appeared to be, greatly provoked and exasperated against the offender: and, indeed, his sentence against him proves he was so above measure. For to punish the man with death, and  
oblige

## S E R M O N IV. 99

oblige him to restore fourfold besides, was highly inequitable, and not only disproportioned to the offence, but far above the utmost rigour and severity of the law, which allowed a much softer atonement, requiring in such a case, no more than an ample restitution and recompence in kind. The judgment, however, seems to have been truly sincere and well-meant, and bespoke rather the honest rashness of an unsuspicious judge, than the cool determination of a conscious and guilty man, who knew he was going to pass sentence upon himself.

I take notice of this particular, because it places this instance of self-deceit, which is the subject of the discourse, in the strongest light, and fully demonstrates the truth of a fact in this great man,

H 2                      which

## 100 SERMON IV.

which happens every day among ourselves, namely, that a man may be guilty of very bad and dishonest actions, and yet reflect so little, or so partially, upon what he has done, as to keep his conscience free, not only from guilt, but even the remotest suspicions, that he is the man which in truth he is, and what the tenor and evidence of his life demonstrate. If we look into the world —David's is no uncommon case;—we see some one or other perpetually copying this bad original, sitting in judgment upon himself,—hearing his own cause, and not knowing what he is doing; hasty in passing sentence, and even executing it too with wrath upon the person of another, when in the language of the prophet, one might say to him with justice, “ thou art the man.”

OF

## S E R M O N IV. 101

Of the many revengeful, covetous, false, and ill-natured persons which we complain of in the world, though we all join in the cry against them, what man amongst us singles out himself as a criminal, or ever once takes it into his head that he adds to the number?—or where is there a man so bad, who would not think it the hardest and most unfair imputation, to have any of those particular vices laid to his charge?

If he has the symptoms never so strong upon him, which he would pronounce infallible in another, they are indications of no such malady in himself.—He sees what no one else sees, some secret and flattering circumstances in his favour, which no doubt make a wide difference betwixt his case, and the party's which he condemns.

H 3

What

What other man speaks so often and vehemently against the vice of pride, sets the weakness of it in a more odious light, or is more hurt with it in another, than the proud man himself? It is the same with the passionate, the designing, the ambitious, and some other common characters in life; and being a consequence of the nature of such vices, and almost inseparable from them, the effects of it are generally so gross and absurd, that where pity does not forbid, 'tis pleasant to observe and trace the cheat thro' the several turnings and windings of the heart, and detect it through all the shapes and appearances which it puts on.

Next to these instances of self-deceit, and utter ignorance of our true disposition and character, which appears in not seeing *that* in ourselves which shocks us

in

## SERMON IV. 103

in another man ; there is another species still more dangerous and delusive, and which the more guarded perpetually fall into from the judgments they make of different vices, according to their age and complexion, and the various ebbs and flows of their passions and desires.

To conceive this, let any man look into his own heart, and observe in how different a degree of detestation, numbers of actions stand there, tho' equally bad and vicious in themselves : he will soon find that such of them, as strong inclination or custom has prompted him to commit, are generally dressed out, and painted with all the false beauties which a soft and flattering hand can give them ; and that the others, to which he feels no propensity, appear at once naked and deformed, surrounded with

all the true circumstances of their folly  
and dishonour.

When David surprised Saul sleeping  
in the cave, and cut off the skirt of his  
robe, we read, his heart smote him for  
what he had done;—strange, it smote  
him not in this matter of Uriah, where  
it had so much stronger reason to take  
the alarm.—A whole year had almost  
passed from the first commission of this  
injustice, to the time the prophet was  
sent to reprove him; and we read not  
once of any remorse or compunction of  
heart for what he had done: and it is  
not to be doubted, had the same pro-  
phet met him when he was returning up  
out of the cave,—and told him, that,  
scrupulous and conscientious as he then  
seemed and thought himself to be,  
he was deceiving himself, and was  
capable

capable of committing the foulest and most dishonourable actions ;—that he should one day murder a faithful and a valiant servant, whom he ought in justice to have loved and honoured ;—that he should without pity first wound him in the tenderest part, by taking away his dearest possession,—and then unmercifully and treacherously rob him of his life.—Had Nathan in a prophetic spirit foretold to David that he was capable of this, and that he should one day actually do it, and from no other motive but the momentary gratification of a base and unworthy passion, he would have received the prediction with horror, and said possibly with Hazael upon just such another occasion, and with the same ignorance of himself,—*What! is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?* And yet in all likelihood,

at

at that very time there wanted nothing but the same degree of temptation, and the same opportunity to induce him to the sin which afterwards overcame him.

Thus the case stands with us still. When the passions are warmed, and the sin which presents itself exactly tallies to the desire, observe how impetuously a man will rush into it, and act against all principles of honour, justice, and mercy.—Talk to him the moment after upon the nature of another vice to which he is not addicted, and from which perhaps his age, his temper, or rank in life secure him ; take notice, how well he reasons, —with what equity he determines,—what an honest indignation and sharpness he expresses against it, and how insensibly his anger kindles against the man who hath done this thing.

Thus

S E R M O N IV. 107

Thus we are nice in grains and scruples,—but knaves in matters of a pound weight; every day straining at gnats, yet swallowing camels;—miserably cheating ourselves, and torturing our reason to bring us in such a report of the sin as suits the present appetite and inclination.

Most of us are aware of and pretend to detest the bare-faced instances of that hypocrisy by which men deceive others, but few of us are upon our guard, or see that more fatal hypocrisy by which we deceive and over-reach our own hearts. It is a flattering and dangerous distemper, which has undone thousands;—we bring the seeds of it along with us into the world,—they insensibly grow up with us from our childhood,—they lie long concealed and undisturbed, and have

208 SERMON IV.

have generally got such deep root in our natures by the time we are come to years of understanding and reflection, that it requires all we have got to defend ourselves from their effects.

To make the case still worse on our sides, 'tis with this as with every grievous distemper of the body,—the remedies are dangerous and doubtful, in proportion to our mistakes and ignorance of the cause: for in the instances of self-deceit, though the head is sick, and the whole heart faint, the patient seldom knows what he ails: of all the things we know and learn, this necessary knowledge comes to us the last.

Upon what principle it happens thus I have endeavoured to lay open in the first part of this discourse; which I conclude.

## SERMON IV. 109.

clude with a serious exhortation to struggle against them: which we can only hope to do, by conversing more and oftener with ourselves, than the business and diversions of the world generally give us leave.

We have a chain of thoughts, desires, engagements and idlenesses, which perpetually return upon us in their proper time and order—let us, I beseech you, assign and set apart some small portion of the day for this purpose,—of retiring into ourselves, and searching into the dark corners and recesses of the heart, and taking notice of what is passing there. If a man can bring himself to do this task with a curious and impartial eye, he will quickly find the fruits of it will more than recompense his time and

110 SERMON IV.

and labour. He will see several irregularities and unsuspected passions within him which he never was aware of:—he will discover in his progress many secret turns and windings in his heart to which he was a stranger, which now gradually open and disclose themselves to him upon a nearer view; in these labyrinths he will trace out such hidden springs and motives for many of his most applauded actions, as will make him rather sorry and ashamed of himself, than proud.

In a word, he will understand *his* errors, and then see the necessity, with David, of imploring God to cleanse him from his secret faults,—and with some hope and confidence to say, with this great man after his conviction,—

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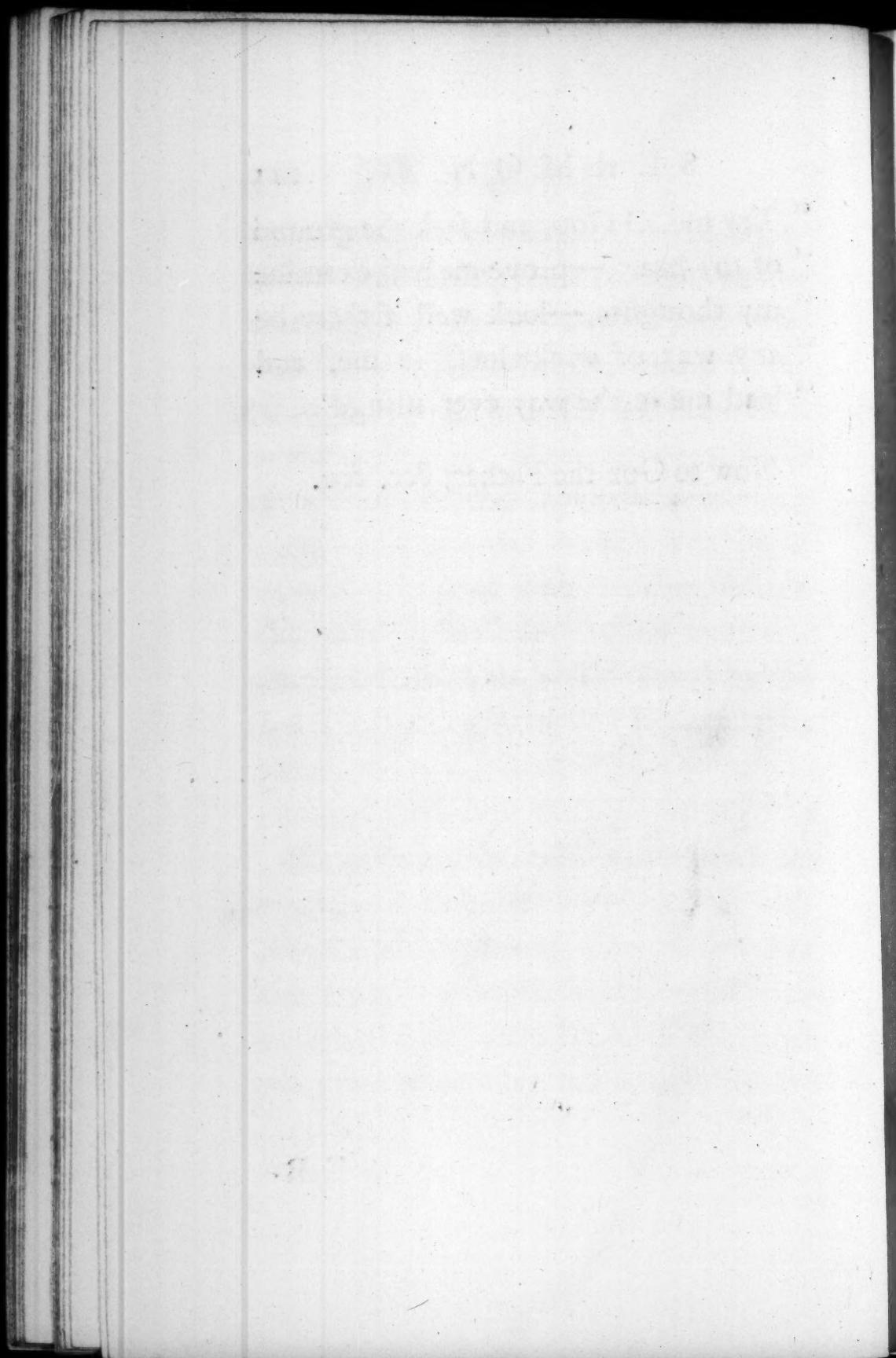
“ Try

## S E R M O N IV.    III

“ Try me, O GOD, and seek the ground  
“ of my heart,—prove me and examine  
“ my thoughts,—look well if there be  
“ any way of wickedness in me, and  
“ lead me in the way everlasting.”

Now to GOD the Father, &c. &c.

S E R.



S E R M O N V.

The Case of Elijah and the  
Widow of Zarephath con-  
sidered.

A C H A R I T Y - S E R M O N .

VOL. I.

I

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Sermon with the  
following Dedication  
to the Lord Bishop of *Car-*  
*lisle*, then Dean of *York*, was  
printed some Years ago, but  
was read by very few; it is  
therefore reprinted in this  
Collection.

TO THE  
VERY REVEREND  
RICHARD OSBALDISTON, D. D.

Dean of York.

SIR,

I Have taken the liberty to inscribe this discourse to you, in testimony of the great respect which I owe to your character in general; and from a sense of what is due to it in particular from every member of the Church of York.

I wish I had as good a reason for doing that, which has

I 2 given

## DEDICATION.

given me the opportunity of making so publick and just an acknowledgment; being afraid there can be little left to be said upon the Subject of Charity, which has not been often thought, and much better expressed by many who have gone before: and indeed it seems so beaten and common a path, that it is not an easy matter for a new comer to distinguish himself in it, by any thing except the novelty of his Vehicle.

I beg, however, Sir, your  
I kind

## DEDICATION.

kind acceptance of it, and of  
the motives which have in-  
duced me to address it to you ;  
one of which, I cannot con-  
ceal in justice to myself, be-  
cause it has proceeded from  
the sense of many favours and  
civilities which I have receiv-  
ed from you. I am,

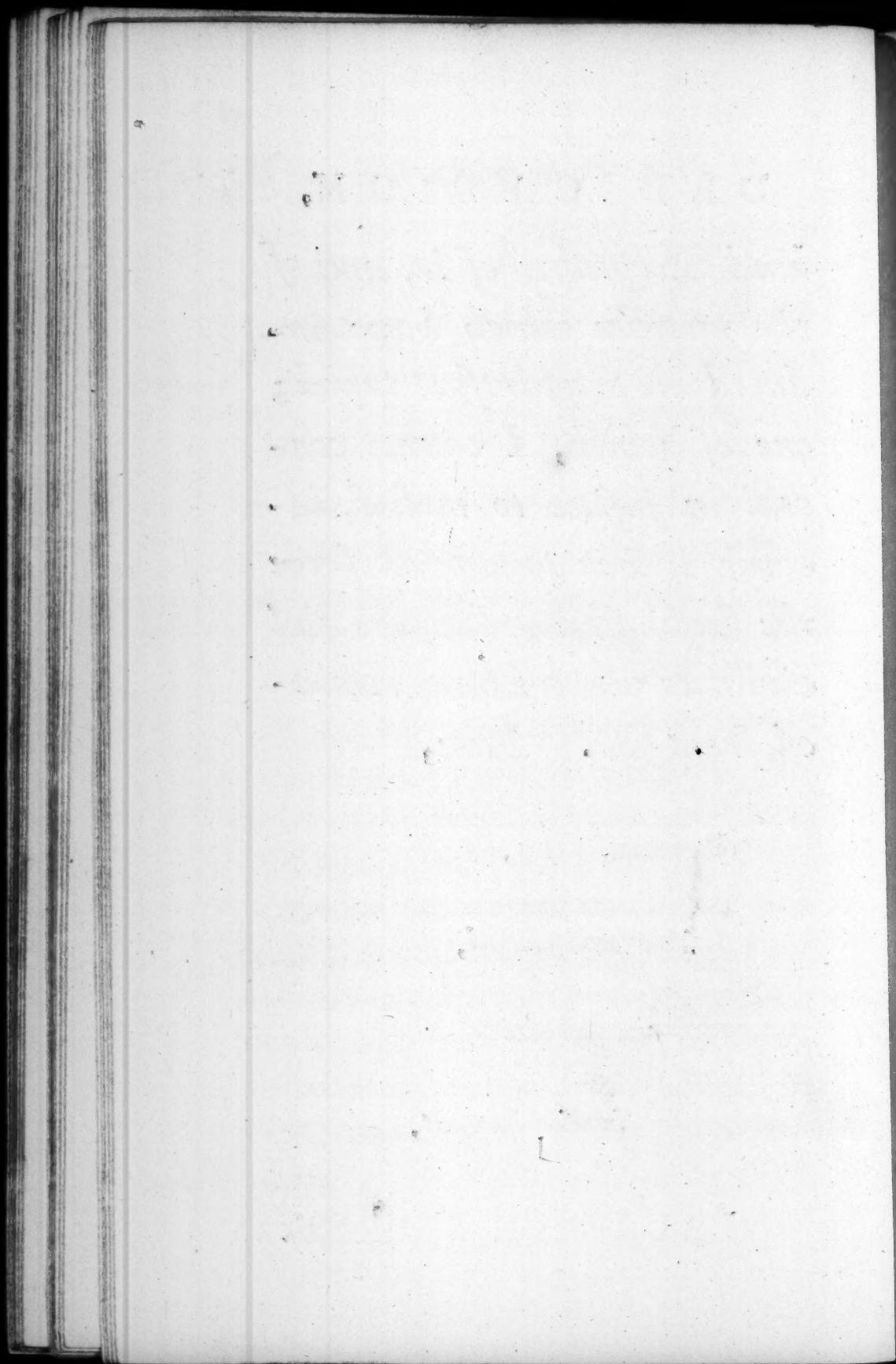
Reverend SIR,

Your most obliged,

and faithful

bumble Servant,

LAURENCE STERNE.



## SERMON V.

I KINGS XVII. 16.

*And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by the prophet Elijah.*

**T**H E words of the text are the record of a miracle wrought in behalf of the widow of Zarephath, who had charitably taken Elijah under her roof, and administered unto him in a time of great scarcity and distress. There is something very interesting and affectionate in the manner this story is related in holy writ; and as it concludes with a second still more remarkable

I 4 proof

120 SERMON V.

proof of God's favour to the same person, in the restoration of her dead son to life, one cannot but consider both miracles as rewards of that act of piety, wrought by infinite power, and left upon record in scripture, not merely as testimonies of the prophet's divine mission, but likewise as two encouraging instances of God Almighty's blessing upon works of charity and benevolence.

In this view I have made choice of this piece of sacred history, which I shall beg leave to make use of as the groundwork for an exhortation to charity in general: and that it may better answer the particular purpose of this solemnity, I will endeavour to enlarge upon it with such reflections, as, I trust in God, will excite some sentiments of compassion  
which

which may be profitable to so pious a design.

Elijah had fled from two dreadful evils, the approach of a famine, and the persecution of Ahab, an enraged enemy: and in obedience to the command of God had hid himself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. In this safe and peaceful solitude, blessed with daily marks of God's providence, the holy man dwelt free both from the cares and glories of the world: by miraculous impulse *the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook;* till by continuance of drought (the windows of heaven being shut up in those days for three years and six months, which was the natural cause likewise of the famine) it came to pass after a while  
that

that the brook, the great fountain of his support, dried up ; and he is again directed by the word of the Lord where to betake himself for shelter. He is commanded to arise and go to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, with an assurance that he had disposed the heart of a widow woman there to sustain him.

The prophet follows the call of his God : the same hand which brought him to the gate of the city, had led also the poor widow out of her doors, oppressed with sorrow. She had come forth upon a melancholy errand, to make preparation to eat her last meal, and share it with her child.

No doubt, she had long fenced against this tragical event with all the thrifty management which self-preservation and

parental

parental love could inspire; full, no doubt, of cares and many tender apprehensions lest the slender stock should fail them before the return of plenty.

But as she was a widow, having lost the only faithful friend who would best have assisted her in this virtuous struggle, the present necessity of the times at length overcame her; and she was just falling down an easy prey to it, when Elijah came to the place where she was. *And he called unto her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called unto her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may*

*I may go in and dress it for me and my son,  
that we may eat it and die. And Elijah  
said unto her, Fear not, but go, and do  
as thou hast said ; but make me thereof a  
little cake first, and bring it unto me, and  
after make for thee and for thy son. For  
thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The  
barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall  
the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the  
Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.*

True charity is always unwilling to find excuses—else here was a fair opportunity of pleading many : she might have insisted over again upon her situation, which necessarily tied up her hands —she might have urged the unreasonableness of the request ;—that she was reduced to the lowest extremity already —and that it was contrary to justice and the first law of nature, to rob herself and child

child of their last morsel, and give it to a stranger.

But in generous spirits, compassion is sometimes more than a balance for self-preservation. For, as GOD certainly interwove that friendly softness in our nature to be a check upon too great a propensity towards self-love—so it seemed to operate here.—For it is observable, that though the prophet backed his request with the promise of an immediate recompence in multiplying her stock; yet it is not evident, she was influenced at all by that temptation. For if she had, doubtless it must have wrought such a mixture of self-interest into the motive of her compliance, as must greatly have allayed the merit of the action. But this, I say, does not appear, but rather the contrary, from the reflection  
she

she makes upon the whole in the last verse of the chapter. *Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.*

Besides, as she was an inhabitant of Zarephath, (or, as it is called by St. Luke, Sarepta, subject to Sidon, the metropolis of Phœnicia, without the bounds of God's people,) she had been brought up in gross darkness and idolatry, in utter ignorance of the LORD GOD of Israel: or, if she had heard of his name, which is all that seems probable, she had been taught to disbelieve the mighty wonders of his hand, and was still less likely to believe his prophet.

Moreover, she might argue, If this man by some secret mystery of his own,  
or

## S E R M O N V. 127

or through the power of his GOD, is able to procure so preternatural a supply for me, whence comes it to pass, that he now stands in want himself, oppressed both with hunger and thirst?

It appears therefore, that she must have been wrought upon by an unmixed principle of humanity.—She looked upon him as a fellow-partner almost in the same affliction with herself—She considered he had come a weary pilgrimage, in a sultry climate, through an exhausted country; where neither bread or water were to be had, but by acts of liberality.—That he had come an unknown traveller, and as a hard heart never wants pretence, that this circumstance, which should rather have befriended, might have helped to oppress him.—She considered, for charity is ever

ever fruitful in kind reasons, that he was now far from his own country, and had strayed out of the reach of the tender offices of some one who affectionately mourned his absence—her heart was touched with pity.—She turned in silence, and went and did according as he had said. And behold, both she, and he, and her house did eat many days; or, as in the margin, one whole year. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, until the day that God sent rain upon the earth.

Though it may not seem necessary to raise conjectures here upon this event, yet it is natural to suppose, the danger of the famine being thus unexpectedly got over, that the mother began to look hopefully forwards upon the rest of her days. There were many widows in Israel

real at that time; when the heavens were shut up for three years and six months, yet, as St. Luke observes, *to none of them was the prophet sent, save to this widow of Sarepta*: in all likelihood, she would not be the last in making the same observation, and drawing from it some flattering conclusion in favour of her son.—Many a parent would build high upon a worse foundation.—“Since “the God of Israel has thus sent his “own messenger to us in our distress, “to pass by so many houses of his own “people, and stop at mine, to save it “in so miraculous a manner from de- “struction; doubtless, this is but an “earnest of his future kind intentions “to us: at least his goodness has de- “creed to comfort my old age by the “long life and health of my son:—but “perhaps, he has something greater

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" still in store for him, and I shall live  
" to see the same hand hereafter crown  
" his head with glory and honour ? "

We may naturally suppose her innocently carried away with such thoughts, when she is called back by an unexpected distemper which surprises her son, and in one moment brings down all her hopes—for his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him.—

The expostulations of immoderate grief are seldom just.—For, though Elijah had already preserved her son, as well as herself, from immediate death, and was the last cause to be suspected of so sad an accident: yet the passionate mother in the first transport challenges him as the author of her misfortune;—as if he had brought down sorrow upon a house which had so hospitably sheltered

## SERMON V. 131

sheltered him. The prophet was too full of compassion, to make reply to so unkind an accusation. He takes the dead child out of his mother's bosom, and laid him upon his own bed ; and he cried unto the Lord and said, O Lord my God, hast thou brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son ?

“ Is this the reward of all her charity  
“ and goodness ? thou hast before this  
“ robbed her of the dear partner of all  
“ her joys and all her cares ; and now  
“ that she is a widow, and has most rea-  
“ son to expect thy protection ; behold  
“ thou hast withdrawn her last prop :  
“ thou hast taken away her child, the  
“ only stay she had to rest on.” — And  
Elijah cried unto God, and said, O Lord  
my God, I pray thee let this child's soul  
come into him again.

## 132 SERMON V.

The prayer was urgent, and bespoke the distress of a humane mind deeply suffering in the misfortunes of another; —moreover his heart was rent with other passions.—He was zealous for the name and honour of his GOD, and thought not only his omnipotence, but his glorious attribute of mercy concerned in the event: for, oh! with what triumph would the prophets of Baal retort his own bitter taunt, and say, *his God was either talking, or he was pursuing, or was in a journey; or peradventure he slept and should have been awaked!*—He was moreover involved in the success of his prayer himself:—honest minds are most hurt by scandal.—And he was afraid, lest so foul a one, so unworthy of his character, might arise among the heathen, who would report with pleasure, “Lo! ‘‘ the widow of Zarephath took the mes-  
“ senger

“ fenger of the God of Israel under her  
“ roof, and kindly entertained him, and  
“ see how she is rewarded : surely the  
“ prophet was ungrateful, he wanted  
“ power, or what is worse, he wanted  
“ pity !”

Besides all this, he pleaded not only the cause of the widow ; it was the cause of charity itself, which had received a deep wound already, and would suffer still more should God deny it this testimony of his favour. So the Lord hearkened unto the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother ; and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

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It would be a pleasure to a good mind to stop here a moment, and figure to itself the picture of so joyful an event.— To behold on one hand the raptures of the parent, overcome with surprize and gratitude, and imagine how a sudden stroke of such impetuous joy must operate on a despairing countenance, long accustomed to sadness.—To conceive on the other side of the *piece*, the holy man approaching with the child in his arms—full of honest triumph in his looks, but sweetened with all the kind sympathy which a gentle nature could overflow with upon so happy an event. It is a subject one might recommend to the pencil of a great genius, and would even afford matter for description here ; but that it would lead us too far from the particular purpose, for which I have enlarged upon thus much of the story already ;

already ; the chief design of which is, to illustrate by a fact, what is evident both in reason and scripture, that a charitable and good action is seldom cast away, but that even in this life it is more than probable, that what is so scattered shall be gathered again with increase. *Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days. Be as a father unto the fatherless, and instead of an husband unto their mother ; so shalt thou be as a son of the Most High, and he will love thee more than thy mother doth. Be mindful of good turns, for thou knowest not what evil shall come upon the earth ; and when thou fallest thou shalt find a stay. It shall preserve thee from all affliction, and fight for thee against thy enemies better than a mighty shield and a strong spear.*

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The great instability of temporal affairs, and constant fluctuation of every thing in this world, afford perpetual occasions of taking refuge in such a security.

What by successive misfortunes ; by failings and cross accidents in trade ; by miscarriage of projects :—what by unsuitable expences of parents, extravagances of children, and the many other secret ways whereby riches make themselves wings and fly away ; so many surprising revolutions do every day happen in families, that it may not seem strange to say, that the posterity of some of the most liberal contributors here, in the changes which one century may produce, may possibly find shelter under this very plant which now they so kindly water. Nay, so quickly sometimes has the wheel turned

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turned round, that many a man has lived to enjoy the benefit of that charity which his own piety projected.

But besides this, and exclusive of the right which God's promise gives it to protection hereafter; charity and benevolence, in the ordinary chain of effects; have a natural and more immediate tendency in themselves to rescue a man from the accidents of the world, by softening the hearts, and winning every man's wishes to its interest. When a compassionate man falls, who would not pity him? who, that had power to do it, would not befriend and raise him up? or could the most barbarous temper offer an insult to his distress without pain and reluctance? so that it is almost a wonder that covetousness, even in spite of itself, does not sometimes argue a man into

## 138 SERMON V.

into charity, by its own principle of looking forwards, and the firm expectation it would delight in of receiving its own again with usury.—So evident is it in the course of God's providence and the natural stream of things, that a good office one time or other generally meets with a reward—Generally, did I say? —how can it ever fail?—when besides all this, so large a share of the recompence is so inseparable even from the action itself. Ask the man who has a tear of tenderness always ready to shed over the unfortunate; who, withal, is ready to distribute and willing to communicate: ask him if the best things, which wits have said of pleasure, have expressed what he has felt, when by a seasonable kindness, he has *made the heart of the widow sing for joy*. Mark then the expressions of unutterable pleasure

## SERMON V. 139

and harmony in his looks; and say, whether Solomon has not fixed the point of true enjoyment in the right place, when he declares, “that he knew no good there was in any of the riches or honours of this world, *but for a man to do good with them in his life.*” Nor was it without reason he made this judgment.—Doubtless he had found and seen the insufficiency of all sensual pleasures; how unable to furnish either a rational or a lasting scheme of happiness: how soon the best of them vanished; the less exceptionable in vanity, but the guilty both *in vanity and vexation of spirit.* But that this was of so pure and refined a nature, it burned without consuming: it was figuratively *the widow’s barrel of meal which wasted not, and cruse of oil which never failed.*

It is not an easy matter to add weight to the testimony of *the wisest man*, upon the pleasure of doing good ; or else the evidence of the philosopher Epicurus is very remarkable, whose word in this matter is the more to be trusted, because a professed sensualist ; who, amidst all the delicacies and improvements of pleasure which a luxuriant fancy might strike out, still maintained, that the best way of enlarging human happiness was, by a communication of it to others.

And if it was necessary here, or there was time to refine upon this doctrine, one might farther maintain, exclusive of the happiness which the mind itself feels in the exercise of this virtue, that the very body of man is never in a better state than when he is most inclined to do good offices :—that as nothing more

con-

S E R M O N V. 141

contributes to health than a benevolence of temper, so nothing generally was a stronger indication of it.

And what seems to confirm this opinion, is an observation, the truth of which must be submitted to every one's reflection—namely—that a disinclination and backwardness to do good, is often attended, if not produced, by an indisposition of the animal as well as rational part of us:—So naturally do the soul and body, as in other cases so in this, mutually befriend, or prey upon each other. And indeed, setting aside all abstruser reasoning upon the point, I cannot conceive but that the very *mechanical motions* which maintain life, must be performed with more equal vigour and freedom in that man whom a great and good soul perpetually inclines to

## 342     S E R M O N . V.

to shew mercy to the miserable, than they can be in a poor, sordid, selfish wretch, whose little contracted heart melts at no man's affliction ; but sits brooding so intently over its own plots and concerns, as to see and feel nothing ; and in truth, enjoy nothing beyond himself : and of whom one may say what that great master of nature has, speaking of a natural sense of harmony, which I think with more justice may be said of compassion, that the man who had it not,—

“ —Was fit for treasons, stratagems, and  
“ spoils :  
“ The MOTIONS of his spirits are dull as  
“ night ;  
“ And his affections dark as EREBUS :  
“ —Let no such man be trusted.—”

What

## SERMON V. 143

What divines say of the mind, naturalists have observed of the body; that there is no passion so natural to it as love, which is the principle of doing good; —and though instances, like this just mentioned, seem far from being proofs of it, yet it is not to be doubted, but that every hard-hearted man has felt much inward opposition before he could prevail upon himself to do aught to fix and deserve the character: and that what we say of long habits of vice, that they are hard to be subdued, may with equal truth be said concerning the natural impressions of benevolence, that a man must do much violence to himself, and suffer many a painful struggle, before he can tear away so great and noble a part of his nature.—Of this antiquity has preserved a beautiful instance in an anecdote of Alexander, the tyrant of Pheres,

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Pheres, who tho' he had so industriously hardened his heart as to seem to take delight in cruelty, insomuch as to murder many of his subjects every day, without cause and without pity ; yet, at the bare representation of a tragedy which related the misfortunes of Hecuba and Andromache, he was so touched with the fictitious distress which the poet had wrought up in it, that he burst out into a flood of tears. The explication of which inconsistency is easy, and casts as great a lustre upon human nature, as the man himself was a disgrace to it. The case seems to have been this : in *real* life he had been blinded with passions, and thoughtlessly hurried on by interest or resentment :—but here, there was no room for motives of that kind ; so that his attention being first caught hold of, and all his vices laid asleep,—

then

then NATURE awoke in triumph, and shewed how deeply she had sown the seeds of compassion in every man's breast; when tyrants, with vices the most at enmity with it were not able entirely to root it out.

But this is painting an amiable virtue, and setting her off, with shades which wickedness lends us, when one might safely trust to the force of her own natural charms, and ask, Whether anything under Heaven, in its own nature, is more lovely and engaging?—To illustrate this the more, let us turn our thoughts within ourselves, and for a moment let any number of us here imagine ourselves at this instant engaged in drawing the most perfect and amiable character, such as, according to our conceptions of the Deity, we should think

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most acceptable to him, and most likely to be universally admired by all mankind.—I appeal to your own thoughts, whether the first idea which offered itself to most of our imaginations, would not be that of a compassionate benefactor, stretching forth his hands to raise up the helpless orphan ? whatever other virtues we should give our hero, we should all agree in making him a generous friend, who thought the opportunities of doing good to be the only charm of his prosperity : we should paint him like the psalmist's *river of God* overflowing the thirsty parts of the earth, that he might enrich them, carrying plenty and gladness along with him. If this was not sufficient, and we were still desirous of adding a farther degree of perfection to so great a character ; we should endeavour to think of some one, if human nature

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nature could furnish such a pattern, who, if occasion required, was willing to undergo all kinds of affliction, to sacrifice himself, to forget his dearest interests, and even lay down his life for the good of mankind.——And here, —O merciful SAVIOUR ! how would the bright original of thy unbounded goodness break in upon our hearts ! *Thou who becamest poor, that we might be rich*—tho' Lord of all this world, yet *hadst not where to lay thy head*—and though equal in power and glory to the great GOD of NATURE, yet *madest thyself of no reputation, tookest upon thee the form of a servant*, — submitting thyself without opening thy mouth, to all the indignities which a thankless and undiscerning people could offer ; and at length, to accomplish our salvation, *becamest obedient unto death, suffering thy-*

self, as on this day \*, *to be led like a lamb to the slaughter.*

The consideration of this stupendous instance of compassion, in the Son of God, is the most unanswerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man, for the reasonableness of it in himself.

—It is the great argument which the Apostles use in almost all their exhortations to good works.—*Beloved, if Christ so loved us*--the inference is unavoidable; and gives strength and beauty to every thing else which can be urged upon the subject. And therefore I have reserved it for my last and warmest appeal, with which I would gladly finish this discourse, that at least for their sakes for whom it is preached, we might be left to the full impression of so exalted and

so

\* Preached on Good Friday.

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so seasonable a motive.—That by reflecting upon the infinite labour of this day's love, in the instance of CHRIST's death, we may consider what an immense debt we owe each other; and by calling to mind the amiable pattern of his life, in doing good, we might learn in what manner we may best discharge it.

And indeed, of all the methods in which a good mind would be willing to do it, I believe there can be none more beneficial, or comprehensive in its effects, than that for which we are here met together—the proper education of poor children being the ground-work of almost every other kind of charity, as that which makes every other subsequent act of it answer the pious expectation of the giver.

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## 150 SERMON V.

Without this foundation first laid, how much kindness in the progress of a benevolent man's life is unavoidably cast away ! and sometimes where it is as senseless as exposing a tender plant to all the inclemencies of a cruel season, and then going with sorrow to take it in, when the root is already dead. I said, therefore, this was the foundation of almost every kind of charity,—and might one not have added, of all policy too ? since the many ill consequences which attend the want of it, though grievously felt by the parties themselves, are no less so by the community of which they are members ; and moreover, of all mischiefs seem the hardest to be redressed —Insomuch, that when one considers the disloyal seductions of popery on one hand, and on the other, that no bad man,

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man, whatever he professes, can be a good subject, one may venture to say, it had been cheaper and better for the nation to have bore the expence of instilling sound principles and good morals, into the neglected children of the lower sort, especially in some parts of Great Britain, than to be obliged, so often as we have been within this last century, to rise up and arm ourselves against the rebellious effects which the want of them have brought down even to our doors. And, in fact, if we are to trust antiquity, the truth of which in this case we have no reason to dispute, this matter has been looked upon of such vast importance to the civil happiness and peace of a people, that some commonwealths, the most eminent for political wisdom, have chose to make a public concern of it; think-

## L 4                      ing

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ing it much safer to be entrusted to the prudence of the magistrate, than to the mistaken tenderness, or natural partiality of the parent.

It was consistent with this, and bespoke a very refined sense of policy in the Lacedæmonians, (tho' by the way, I believe, different from what more modern politics would have directed in like circumstances) when Antipater demanded of them fifty children, as hostages for the security of a distant engagement, they made this brave and wise answer, "they would not,—they could not consent:—they would rather give him double the number of their best grown up men."—Intimating, that however they were distressed, they would chuse any inconvenience rather

## SERMON V. 153

ther than suffer the loss of their country's education ; and the opportunity (which if once lost can never be regained) of giving their youth an early tincture of religion, and bringing them up to a love of industry, and a love of the laws and constitution of their country.—If this shews the great importance of a proper education to children of all ranks and conditions, what shall we say then of those whom the providence of God has placed in the very lowest lot of life, utterly cast out of the *way* of knowledge, without a parent,—sometimes may be without a friend to guide and instruct them ; but what common pity and the necessity of their sad situation engages ; ——where the dangers which surround them on every side are so great and many, that for one fortunate passenger in life,  
who

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who makes his way well in the world with such early disadvantages, and so dismal a setting out, we may reckon thousands, who every day suffer shipwreck, and are lost for ever.

If there is a case under heaven which calls out aloud for the more immediate exercise of compassion, and which may be looked upon as the compendium of all charity, surely it is this: and I am persuaded there would want nothing more to convince the greatest enemy to these kinds of charities that it is so, but a bare opportunity of taking a nearer view of some of the more distressful objects of it.

Let him go into the dwellings of the unfortunate, into some mournful cottage,

tage, where poverty and affliction reign together. There let him behold the disconsolate widow — sitting — steeped in tears ; — thus sorrowing over the infant, she knows not how to succour.—

“ O my child, thou art now left exposed to a wide and a vicious world,  
“ too full of snares and temptations for  
“ thy tender and unpractised age. Perhaps a parent’s love may magnify  
“ those dangers—But when I consider  
“ thou art driven out naked into the  
“ midst of them without friends, without  
“ fortune, without instruction, my  
“ heart bleeds beforehand for the evils  
“ which may come upon thee. GOD,  
“ in whom we trusted, is witness, so  
“ low had his providence placed us,  
“ that we never indulged one wish to  
“ have made thee rich,—virtuous we  
“ would.

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“ would have made thee ;—for thy  
“ father, *my husband, was a good man,*  
“ *and feared the Lord,—*and though  
“ all the fruits of his care and industry  
“ were little enough for our support,  
“ yet he honestly had determined to  
“ have spared some portion of it, scanty  
“ as it was, to have placed thee safely  
“ in the way of knowledge and instruc-  
“ tion—But alas ! he is gone from us,  
“ never to return more, and with him  
“ are fled the means of doing it :—  
“ *For, Behold the creditor is come upon us,*  
“ *to take all that we have.”—*Grief  
is eloquent, and will not easily be imi-  
tated.—But let the man, who is the least  
friend to distresses of this nature, con-  
ceive some disconsolate widow uttering  
her complaint even in this manner, and  
then let him consider, if there is any sor-  
row

## SERMON V. 157

*row like this sorrow, wherewith the Lord has afflicted her ? or whether there can be any charity like that, of taking the child out of the mother's bosom, and rescuing her from these apprehensions ? Should a heathen, a stranger to our holy religion and the love it teached, should he, as he journeyed come to the place where she lay, when he saw, would he not have compassion on her ? God forbid a christian should this day want it ; or at any time look upon such a distress, and pass by on the other side.*

Rather, let him do, as his Saviour taught him, *bind up the wounds, and pour comfort into the heart of one, whom the hand of God has so bruised.* Let him practise what it is, with Elijah's transport, to say to the afflicted widow,

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—*See, thy son liveth!*—liveth, by my charity, and the bounty of this hour, to all the purposes which make life desirable,—to be made a good man, and a profitable subject: on one hand to be trained up to such a sense of his duty, as may secure him an interest in the world to come; and with regard to this world, to be so brought up in it to a love of honest labour and industry, as all his life long to earn and eat his bread with joy and thankfulness.

“ Much peace and happiness rest upon  
“ on the head and heart of every one  
“ who thus brings children to CHRIST.  
“ —May the blessing of him that was  
“ ready to perish come seasonably upon  
“ him.—The Lord comfort him, when  
“ he most wants it, when he lays sick

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“ upon his bed ; make thou, O God !  
“ all his bed in his sickness ; and for  
“ what he now scatters, give him, then,  
“ that peace of thine which passeth all  
“ understanding, and which nothing in  
“ this world can either give or take  
“ away.” Amen.

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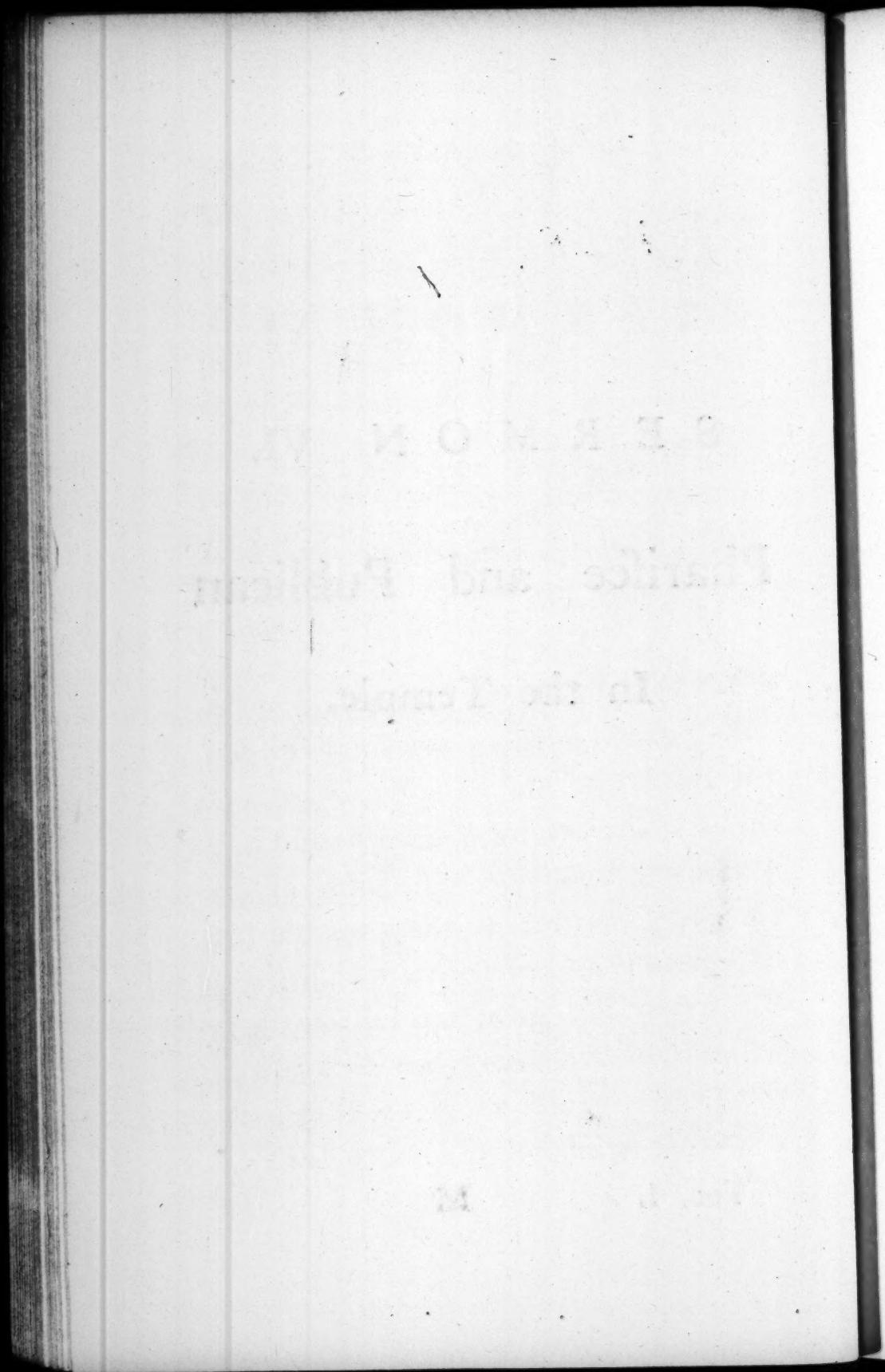
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S E R M O N VI.

Pharisee and Publican  
In the Temple.

VOL. I.

M



## S E R M O N VI.

LUKE XVIII. 14. 1st part.

*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.*

THESE words are the judgment which our SAVIOUR has left upon the behaviour and different degrees of merit in the two men, the Pharisee and Publican, whom he represents, in the foregoing parable, as going up into the temple to pray:—in what manner they discharged this great and solemn duty, will best be seen from a consideration of the prayer, which each is said to have addressed to GOD upon the occasion.

The pharisee, instead of an act of humiliation in that awful presence before which he stood,—with an air of triumph and self-sufficiency, thanks God that he had not made him like others—extortioners, adulterers, unjust, or even as this publican.—The publican is represented as standing afar off, and with a heart touched with humility from a just sense of his own unworthiness, is said only to have smote upon his breast, saying—God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, adds our SAVIOUR, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

Though the justice of this determination strikes every one at first sight, it may not be amiss to enter into a more particular examination of the evidence and reasons upon which it might be founded,  
not

not only because it may place the equity of this decision in favour of the publican in a stronger light, but that the subject seems likely to lead me to a train of reflections not unsuitable to the solemnity of the season \*.

The pharisee was one of that sect, who, in our SAVIOUR's time, what by the austerity of their lives—their public alms-deeds, and greater pretences to piety than other men, had gradually wrought themselves into much credit and reputation with the people: and indeed, as the bulk of these are easily caught with appearances, their character seems to have been admirably well suited to such a purpose.—If you looked no farther than the outward part of it, you would think it made up of all goodness and perfection; an uncommon sanctity

# M 3 of

\* Preached in Lent.

of life, guarded by great decorum and severity of manners,—profuse and frequent charities to the poor—many acts of religion, much observance of the law—much abstinence—much prayer.—

It is painful to suspect the appearance of so much good—and would have been so here, had not our blessed SAVIOUR left us their real character upon record, and drawn up by himself in one word—that the sect were like whitened sepulchres, all fair and beautiful without, and enriched there with whatever could attract the eye of the beholder; but, when searched within-side, were full of corruption and of whatever could shock and disgust the searcher. So that with all their affectation and piety, and more extraordinary strictness and regularity in their

their outward deportment, all was irregular and uncultivated within—and all these fair pretences, how promising soever, blasted by the indulgence of the worst of human passions,—pride—spiritual pride, the worst of all pride—hypocrisy, self-love, covetousness, extortion, cruelty and revenge. What pity it is that the sacred name of religion should ever have been borrowed, and employed in so bad a work, as in covering over such a black catalogue of vices—or that the fair form of virtue should have been thus disgraced and forever drawn into suspicion, from the unworthy uses of this kind to which the artful and abandoned have often put her! The pharisee seems to have had not many scruples of this kind, and the prayer he makes use of in the temple is a true picture of the man's heart, and

M 4              shews

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shews with what a disposition and frame of mind he came to worship.—

God ! I thank thee that thou hast formed me of different materials from the rest of my species, whom thou hast created frail and vain by nature, but by choice and disposition utterly corrupt and wicked.

Me, thou hast fashioned in a different mould, and hast infused so large a portion of thy spirit into me, lo ! I am raised above the temptations and desires to which flesh and blood are subject.—I thank thee that thou hast made me thus —not a frail vessel of clay, like that of other men—or even this publican, but that I stand here a chosen and sanctified vessel unto thee.

After

After this obvious paraphrase upon the words, which speaks no more than the true spirit of the pharisee's prayer,—you would naturally ask, what reason was there for all this triumph—or what foundation could he have to insult in this manner over the infirmities of mankind—or even those of the humble publican who stood before him?—Why, says he, I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of all that I possess.—Truly a very indifferent account of himself—and if that was all he had to offer in his own behalf, GOD knows, it was but a weak foundation to support so much arrogance and self-conceit; because the observance of both the one and the other of these ordinances might be supposed well enough to be consistent with the most profligate of life and manners.

The

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The conduct and behaviour of the publican appears very different—and indeed as much the reverse to this, as you could conceive. But before we enter upon that, as I have spoken largely to the character of the pharisee, 'twill be but justice to say a word or two in general to his.—The publican was one of that order of men employed by the Roman emperors in levying the taxes and contributions which were from time to time exacted from Judea as a conquered nation. Whether from the particular fate of that employment, owing to the fixed aversion which men have to part with what is their own, or from whatever other causes it happened—so it was, that the whole set of men were odious, insomuch that the name of a publican was a term of reproach and infamy among the Jews.

Perhaps

Perhaps the many instances of rigour to which their office might direct them—heightened sometimes by a mixture of cruelty and insolence of their own—and possibly always made to appear worse than they were by the loud clamours and misrepresentations of others—all might have contributed to form and fix this odium. But it was here no doubt, as in all other classes of men, whose professions expose them to more temptations than that of others—that there are numbers who still behave well, and who, amidst all the snares and opportunities which lie in their way, pass through them, not only with an unblemished character, but with the inward testimony of a good conscience.

The publican in all likelihood was one of these—and the sentiments of candour

candour and humility which the view of his condition inspired, are such as could come only from a heart and character thus described,

He goes up into the temple to pay his sacrifice of prayer—in the discharge of which, he pleads no merit of his own, —enters into no comparison with others, —or justification of himself with GOD ; but in reverence to that holier part of the temple where his presence was supposed more immediately to be displayed —he keeps afar off—is afraid to lift up his eyes towards heaven——but smites upon his breast, and in a short but fervent ejaculation, submissively begs GOD to have mercy upon his sins. O GOD ! how precious, how amiable, is true humility ! what a difference in thy sight does it make to consist betwixt man and man !

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man ! Pride was not made for a creature with such manifold imperfections —religious pride is a dress which still worse becomes him——because, of all others, 'tis that to which he has the least pretence—the best of us fall seven times a day, and thereby add some degree of unprofitableness to the character of those who do all that is commanded them—was I perfect therefore, says Job, I would not know my soul, I would be silent, I would be ignorant of my own righteousness; forshould I say I was perfect, it would prove me to be perverse. From this introduction I will take occasion to recommend this virtue of religious humility, which so naturally falls from the subject, and which cannot more effectually be enforced, than by an enquiry into the chief causes which produce the opposite vice to it——that of spiritual

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spiritual pride—for in this malady of the mind of man, the case is parallel with most others of his body, the dangers of which can never rightly be apprehended ; or can remedies be applied either with judgment or success, till they are traced back to their first principles, and the seeds of the disorder are laid open and considered.

And first, I believe, one of the most general causes of spiritual pride, is that which seems to have misled the pharisee—a mistaken notion of the true principles of his religion. He thought, no doubt, that the whole of it was comprehended in the two articles of paying tythes and frequent fasting, and that when he had discharged his conscience of them—he had done all that was required at his hands, and might

with reason go, and thank God that he had not made him like others.—It is not to be questioned, but through force of this error, the pharisee might think himself to be, what he pretended, a religious and upright man.—For however he might be brought to act a double and insincere part in the eyes of men upon worldly views—it is not to be supposed—that when he stood by himself, apart in the temple, and no witnesses of what passed between him and his GOD—that he should knowingly and wilfully have dared to act so open and barefaced a scene of mockery in the face of Heaven. This is scarce probable—and therefore it must have been owing to some delusion in his education, which had early planted in his mind false and wretched notions of the essentials of religion—which as he grew up  
had

had proved the seeds of infinite error both in practice and speculation.—

With the rest of his sect, he had been so principled and instructed as to observe a scrupulous nicety and most religious exactness in the lesser matters of his religion—its frequent washings—its fastings and other external rites, of no merit in themselves—but to stand exempted from the more troublesome exactness in the weightier matters of the law, which were of eternal and unchangeable obligation. So that, they were in truth blind guides—who thus will strain at a gnat and yet swallow a camel; and, as our SAVIOUR reproves them from a familiar instance of domestic inconsistency —would make clean the outside of the cup and platter—yet suffer the inside—the most material part, to be full of corruption

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ruption and excess. From this knowledge of the character and principles of the pharisee, 'tis easy to account for his sentiments and behaviour in the temple, which were just such as they would have led one to have expected.

Thus it has always happened, by a fatality common to all such abuses of religion, as make it to consist in external rites and ceremonies more than inward purity and integrity of heart.—As these outward things are easily put in practice—and capable of being attained to, without much capacity, or much opposition to flesh and blood—it too naturally betrays the professors of it into a groundless persuasion of their own godliness, and a despicable one of that of others, in their religious capacities, and the relations in which they stand towards God: which is the very definition of spiritual pride.

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When,

When the true heat and spirit of devotion is thus lost and extinguished under a cloud of ostentatious ceremonies and gestures, as is remarkable in the Roman church—where the celebration of high mass, when set off to the best advantage with all its scenical decorations and finery, looks more like a theatrical performance, than that humble and solemn appeal which dust and ashes are offering up to the throne of God;—when religion, I say, is thus clogged and bore down by such a weight of ceremonies—it is much easier to put in pretensions to holiness upon such a mechanical system as is left of it, than where the character is only to be got and maintained by a painful conflict and perpetual war against the passions. 'Tis easier, for instance, for a zealous papist to cross himself and tell his beads, than for an humble

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humble protestant to subdue the lusts of anger, intemperance, cruelty and revenge, to appear before his Maker with that preparation of mind which becomes him. The operation of being sprinkled with holy water, is not so difficult in itself, as that of being chaste and spotless within—conscious of no dirty thought or dishonest action. 'Tis a much shorter way to kneel down at a confessional and receive absolution—than to live so as to deserve it—not at the hands of men—but at the hands of GOD—who sees the heart, and cannot be imposed on.—The atchievement of keeping Lent, or abstaining from flesh on certain days, is not so hard, as that of abstaining from the works of it at all times—especially, as the point is generally managed amongst the richer sort with such art and epicurism at their tables—and with such

N 2 indulgence

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indulgence to a poor mortified appetite —that an entertainment upon a fast is much more likely to produce a *surfeit* than a fit of sorrow.

One might run the parallel much farther, but this may be sufficient to shew how dangerous and delusive these mistakes are,—how apt to mislead and overset weak minds, which are ever apt to be caught by the pomp of such external parts of religion. This is so evident that even in our own church, where there is the greatest chastity in things of this nature—and of which none are retained in our worship, but what, I believe, tend to excite and assist it—yet so strong a propensity is there in our nature to sense—and so unequal a match is the understanding of the bulk of mankind, for the impressions of outward things—  
that

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that we see thousands who every day mistake the shadow for the substance, and was it fairly put to the trial, would exchange the reality for the appearance.

You see this was almost universally the case of the Jewish church—where, for want of proper guard and distinction betwixt the means of religion and religion itself, the ceremonial part in time eat away the moral part, and left nothing but a shadow behind.—'Tis to be feared the buffooneries of the Romish church bid fair to do it the same ill office, to the disgrace and utter ruin of christianity wherever popery is established. What then remains, but that we rectify these gross and pernicious notions of religion, and place it upon its true bottom, which we can only do, by bringing back religion to that cool point of reason which

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first shewed us its obligation—by always remembering that God is a spirit—and must be worshipped suitable to his nature, *i. e.* in spirit and in truth—and that the most acceptable sacrifice we can offer him is a virtuous and an upright mind—and however necessary it is, not to leave the ceremonial and positive parts of religion undone—yet not like the pharisee to rest there—and omit the weightier matters, but keep this in view perpetually, that though the instrumental duties of religion are duties of unquestionable obligation to us—yet they are still but INSTRUMENTAL DUTIES, conducive to the great end of all religion—which is to purify our hearts—and conquer our passions—and, in a word, to make us wiser and better men—better neighbours—better citizens—and better servants to God. To whom, &c.

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S E R M O N VII.

Vindication of Human Nature.

N 4

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## SERMON VII.

ROMANS XIV. 7.

*For none of us liveth to himself.*

**T**H E R E is not a sentence in scripture, which strikes a narrow soul with greater astonishment;—and one might as easily engage to clear up the darkest problem in geometry to an ignorant mind, as make a bold one comprehend the truth and reasonableness of this plain proposition—No man liveth to himself! Why?—Does any man live to any thing else?—In the whole compass of human life can a prudent man steer to a safer point?—Not live to himself!—To whom then?—Can any interests

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terests or concerns which are foreign to a man's self have such a claim over him that he must serve under them,—suspend his own pursuits,—step out of his right course, till others have passed by him, and attained the several ends and purposes of living before him?

If, with a selfish heart, such an enquirer should happen to have a speculating head too, he will proceed, and ask you whether this same principle which the apostle here throws out of the life of man, is not in fact the grand bias of his nature?—That however we may flatter ourselves with fine-spun notions of disinterestedness and heroism in what we do; that were the most popular of our actions stripped naked, and the true motives and intentions of them searched to the bottom;

we

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we should find little reason for triumph upon that score.—

In a word, he will say, that a man is altogether a bubble to himself in this matter, and that after all that can be said in his behalf, the truest definition that can be given of him is this, that he is a selfish animal; and that all his actions have so strong a tincture of that character, as to shew (to whomever else he was intended to live) that in fact he lives only to himself.

Before I reply directly to this accusation, I cannot help observing by the way, that there is scarce any thing which has done more disservice to social virtue, than the frequent representations of human nature, under this hideous picture of deformity, which by leaving out all that is

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is generous and friendly in the heart of man, has sunk him below the level of a brute, as if he was a composition of all that was mean-spirited and selfish. Surely, 'tis one step towards acting well, to think worthily of our nature; and, as in common life the way to make a man honest, is, to suppose him so, and treat him as such:—so here, to set some value upon ourselves, enables us to support the character, and even inspires and adds sentiments of generosity and virtue to those which we have already preconceived. The scripture tells, That God made man in his own image,—not surely in the sensitive and corporeal part of him, that could bear no resemblance with a pure and infinite Spirit—but what resemblance he bore was undoubtedly in the moral rectitude, and the kind and benevolent affections of his nature.

And

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And tho' the brightness of his image has been fullied greatly by the fall of man in our first parents, and the characters of it rendered still less legible by the many super-inductions of his own depraved appetites since,—yet 'tis a laudable pride and a true greatness of mind to cherish a belief, that there is so much of that glorious image still left upon it, as shall restrain him from base and disgraceful actions: to answer which end, what thought can be more conducive than that of our being made in the likeness of the greatest and best of Beings? This is a plain consequence. And the consideration of it should have in some measure been a protection to human nature, from the rough usage she has met with from the satirical pens of so many of the French writers, as well as of our own country, who with more wit than well-meaning have desperately

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perately fallen foul upon the whole species, as a set of creatures incapable either of private friendship or public spirit, but just as the case suited their own interest and advantage.

That there is selfishness and meanness enough in the souls of one part of the world, to hurt the credit of the other part of it, is what I shall not dispute against; but to judge of the whole, from this bad sample, and because one man is plotting and artful in his nature;—or, a second openly makes his pleasure or his profit the whole center of all his designs;—or because a third strait-hearted wretch fits confined within himself,—feels no misfortunes, but those which touch himself; to involve the whole race without mercy under such detested characters, is a conclusion as false, as it is pernicious;

and

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and was it in general to gain credit, could serve no end, but the rooting out of our nature all that is generous, and planting in the stead of it such an aversion to each other, as must untie the bands of society, and rob us of one of the greatest pleasures of it, the mutual communications of kind offices; and by poisoning the fountain, rendering every thing suspected that flows through it.

To the honour of human nature, the scripture teaches us, that God made man upright,—and tho' he has since found out many inventions, which have much dishonoured this noble structure, yet the foundation of it stands as it was,—the whole frame and design of it carried on upon social virtue and public spirit, and every member of us so evidently sup-

ported by this strong cement, that we may say with the apostle, *that no man liveth to himself*. In whatsoever light we view him we shall see evidently, that there is no station or condition of his life,—no office or relation, or circumstance, but there arises from it so many ties, so many indispensable claims upon him, as must perpetually carry him beyond any selfish consideration, and shew plainly, that was a man foolishly wicked enough to design to live to himself alone, he would either find it impracticable, or he would lose, at least, the very thing which made life itself desirable. We know that our Creator, like an all-wise contriver, in this, as in all other of his works, has implanted in mankind such appetites and inclinations as were suitable for their state; that is, such as would naturally lead him to the love of society

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society and friendship, without which he would have been found in a worse condition than the very beasts of the field. No one therefore who lives in society, can be said to live to himself,—he lives to his God,—to his king, and his country.—He lives to his family, to his friends, to all under his trust, and in a word, he lives to the whole race of mankind ; whatsoever has the character of man, and wears the same image of God that he does, is truly his brother, and has a just claim to his kindness.—That this is the case in fact as well as in theory, may be made plain to any one who has made any observations upon human life.—When we have traced it through all its connections—viewed it under the several obligations which succeed each other in a perpetual rotation through the different stages of a hasty pilgrimage, we

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shall find that these do operate so strongly upon it, and lay us justly under so many restraints, that we are every hour sacrificing something to society, in return for the benefits we receive from it.

To illustrate this, let us take a short survey of the life of any one man (not liable to great exceptions, but such a life as is common to most;) let us examine it merely to this point, and try how far it will answer such a representation.

If we begin with him in that early age wherein the strongest marks of undisguised tenderness and disinterested compassion shew themselves—I might previously observe, with what impressions he is come out of the hands of GOD, with the very bias upon his nature, which prepares him for the character, which he was designed to fulfil.—But let us

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pass by the years which denote childhood, as no lawful evidence, you'll say, in this dispute; let us follow him to the period, when he is just got loose from tutors and governors, when his actions may be argued upon with less exception. If you observe, you will find that one of the first and leading propensities of his nature is that, which discovers itself in the desire of society, and the spontaneous love towards those of his kind. And tho' the natural wants and exigencies of his condition are, no doubt, one reason of this amiable impulse,—God having founded that in him as a provisional security to make him social;—yet tho' it is a reason in nature—'tis a reason, to him yet undiscovered. Youth is not apt to philosophise so deeply—but follows,—as it feels itself prompted by the inward working of benevolence—with-

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out view to itself, or previous calculation either of the loss or profit which may accrue. Agreeably to this, observe how warmly, how heartily he enters into friendships,—how disinterested, and unsuspicuous in the choice of them,—how generous and open in his professions! —how sincere and honest in making them good!—When his friend is in distress,—what lengths he will go,—what hazards he will bring upon himself,—what embarrassment upon his affairs to extricate and serve him! If man is altogether a selfish creature, (as these moralizers would make him) 'tis certain he does not arrive at the full maturity of it, in this time of his life.—No. If he deserves any accusation, 'tis in the other extreme, “ That in his youth he is generally more FOOL than KNAVE,”—and so far from being suspected of

living

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living to himself, that he lives rather to every body else ; the unconsciousness of art and design in his own intentions, rendering him so utterly void of a suspicion of it in others, as to leave him too oft a bubble to every one who will take the advantage.—But you'll say, he soon abates of these transports of disinterested love ; and as he grows older,—grows wiser, and learns to live more to himself.

Let us examine.—

That a longer knowledge of the world, and some experience of insincerity,—will teach him a lesson of more caution in the choice of friendships, and less forwardness in the undistinguished offers of his services, is what I grant. But if he cools of these, does he not

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grow warmer still in connections of a different kind? Follow him, I pray you, into the next stage of life, where he has entered into engagements, and appears as the father of a family, and you will see the passion still remains—the stream somewhat more confined,—but runs the stronger for it.—The same benevolence of heart altered only in its course, and the difference of objects towards which it tends. Take a short view of him in this light, as acting under the many tender claims which that relation lays upon him,—spending many weary days, and sleepless nights—utterly forgetful of himself, intent only upon his family, and with an anxious heart contriving and labouring to preserve it from distress, against that hour when he shall be taken from its protection. Does such a one live to himself?

—He

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—He who rises early, late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness, to save others the trouble of doing so after him. Does such a one live only to himself?—Ye who are parents, answer this question for him, How oft have ye sacrificed your health,—your ease,—your pleasures,—nay, the very comforts of your lives, for the sake of your children?—How many indulgencies have ye given up?—What self-denials and difficulties have ye cheerfully undergone for them?—In their sickness, or reports of their misconduct, how have ye gone on your way sorrowing?—What alarms within you, when fancy forebodes but imaginary misfortunes hanging over them?—but when real ones have overtaken them, and mischief befallen them in the way in which they have gone, how sharper than a sword

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have ye felt the workings of a parental kindness? In whatever period of human life we look for proofs of selfishness,—let us not seek them in this relation of a parent, whose whole life, when truly known, is often little else but a succession of cares, heart-aches, and disquieting apprehensions,—enough to shew that he is but an instrument in the hands of GOD to provide for the well-being of others, to serve their interest as well as his own.

If you try the truth of this reasoning upon every other part or situation of the same life, you will find it holds good in one degree or other. Take a view of it out of these closer connections both of a friend and parent.—Consider him for a moment under that natural alliance in which even a heathen poet has placed him;

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him; namely, that of a man;—and as such, to his honour, as one incapable of standing unconcerned in whatever concerns his fellow-creatures.—Compassion has so great a share in our nature, and the miseries of this world are so constant an exercise of it, as to leave it in no one's power (who deserves the name of a man) in this respect, *to live to himself.*

He cannot stop his ears against the cries of the unfortunate.—The sad story of the fatherless and him that has no helper *must* be heard—*The sorrowful sighing of the prisoners will come before him;* and a thousand other untold cases of distress to which the life of man is subject, find a way to his heart, let interest guard the passage as it will—*if he has this world's goods, and seeth his*

*bis brother have need, he will not be able to shut up his bowels of compassion from him.*

Let any man of common humanity, look back upon his own life as subjected to these strong claims, and recollect the influence they have had upon him. How oft the mere impulses of generosity and compassion have led him out of his way?—In how many acts of charity and kindness, his fellow-feeling for others has made him forget himself?—In neighbourly offices, how oft he has acted against all considerations of profits, convenience, nay sometimes even of justice itself?—Let him add to this account, how much in the progress of his life, has been given up even to the lesser obligations of civility and good manners?—What restraints they have

have laid him under? How large a portion of his time,—how much of his inclination and the plan of life he should most have wished, has from time to time been made a sacrifice to his good-nature and disinclination to give pain or disgust to others?

Whoever takes a view of the life of man in this glass wherein I have shewn it, will find it so beset and hemmed in with obligations of one kind or other, as to leave little room to suspect, that *man can live to himself*: and so closely has our Creator linked us together (as well as all other parts of his works) for the preservation of that harmony in the frame and system of things which his wisdom has at first established,—that we find this bond of mutual dependence, however relaxed, is too strong to be

be broke: and I believe, that the most selfish men find it is so, and that they cannot, in fact, live so much to themselves, as the narrowness of their own hearts incline them. If these reflections are just upon the moral relations in which we stand to each other, let us close the examination with a short reflection upon the great relation in which we stand to God.

The first and more natural thought on this subject, which at one time or other will thrust itself upon every man's mind, is this,—That there is a GOD who made me,—to whose gift I owe all the powers and faculties of my soul, to whose providence I owe all the blessings of my life, and by whose permission it is that I exercise and enjoy them; that I am placed in this world as a creature of but

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but a day, hastening to the place from whence I shall not return—That I am accountable for my conduct and behaviour to this great and wisest of Beings, before whose judgment-seat I must finally appear, and receive the things done in my body,—whether they are good, or whether they are bad.

Can any one doubt but the most inconsiderate of men sometimes sit down coolly, and make some such plain reflections as these upon their state and condition?—or, that after they have made them, can one imagine, they lose all effect?—As little appearance as there is of religion in the world, there is a great deal of its influence felt in its affairs—nor can one so root out the principles of it, but like nature they will

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will return again, and give checks and interruptions to guilty pursuits. There are seasons, when the thoughts of a just God overlooking, and the terror of an after-reckoning has made the most determined tremble, and stop short in the execution of a wicked purpose; and if we conceive that the worst of men lay some restraint upon themselves from the weight of this principle, what shall we think of the good and virtuous part of the world, who live under the perpetual influence of it,—who sacrifice their appetites and passions from a conscience of their duty to God; and consider him as the object to whom they have dedicated their service, and make that the first principle, and ultimate end of all their actions?—How many real and unaffected instances there are  
in

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in the world of men thus governed,  
will not concern us so much to enquire,  
as to take care that we are of the num-  
ber: which may God grant for the sake  
of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*The END of the FIRST VOLUME.*

